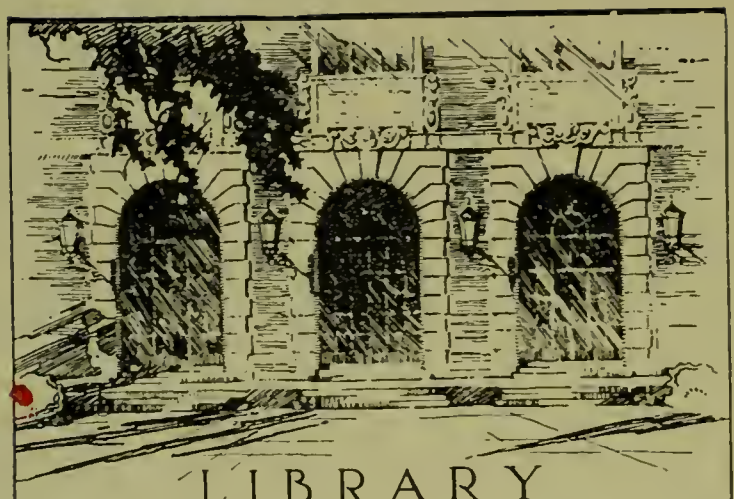

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MISS BLANCHARD OF CHICAGO.

Miss Blanchard of Chicago

BY

ALBERT KEVILL-DAVIES,

AUTHOR OF "AN AMERICAN WIDOW," "MARRIAGE UP TO DATE," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MISS BLANCHARD OF CHICAGO.

MISS BLANCHARD OF CHICAGO.

CHAPTER I.

A SLEEPING CAR INCIDENT.

When Arthur reported himself at the depôt of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad at nine o'clock that evening, he found that instructions had already been given for him to travel on the night express to St Louis as an extra sleeping car conductor; and when the train pulled out of the station he was busily engaged in studying the mechanism and workings of Mr Pullman's "palace cars."

All trains look their best just on the eve of departure, and this is especially the case in regard to the Pullman portion of them. At that particular time the windows, mirrors, and gas globes are remarkable for their cleanliness,

the carpets and seats are in an absolutely stainless condition, the decorations are spotless and dustless, and all the brass and nickle-plate work is shining like diamonds, so that the *tout ensemble* is such as must make many a thrifty house-wife jealous.

At night-time especially, the effect of the labour and attention bestowed by the car-cleaners is more noticeable, because of the brilliancy and number of the lights which are now used to cheer the traveller on his way.

To Arthur the scene was both pleasant and interesting. There were three "sleepers" on the train, each one fairly filled with passengers, many of whom appeared to be ladies and gentlemen of bright and cheerful temperaments, while gloom and melancholy appeared to be entirely excluded. Then the sleeping car conductor came and suggested that Vallance should accompany him while collecting tickets, remarking that after this object lesson he would soon get into the way of it. So he followed his teacher through each of the cars, carefully watching how he collected both the railway and sleeping car tickets, and gave punched checks in exchange for the latter. The railroad tickets he simply collected to hand to the train conductor, in order that the

passengers should not be disturbed during the night.

A little later the last-named official then in charge of the train came in and looked over all the tickets taken up for him, counted and punched them, and then leaned back in his seat and took things easily.

He is a sort of captain over the entire train is this latter individual, and every other *employé* is subject to his authority. He is responsible for the maintenance of order, for the proper performance of their duties by the brakemen, and engineer, and fireman ; for the running of the train according to orders, and for the observance of and compliance with all signals and despatches while *en route.* If need be, he is invested with police authority, and can peremptorily eject a disorderly passenger or a mutinous *employé* from the train at any point. Unlike the system which prevails in England, where ticket-collectors examine or take up all tickets at stations, this duty is always performed in America by the conductor while the train is in motion, and no one else has any right whatever to meddle with them, except by his request.

The authority of a sleeping car conductor is very much less than that of the man in

charge of the train, for it is limited to the "sleepers," and his only subordinates are the negro porters who perform the offices of chambermaids; but he is responsible for the general comfort of the passengers, the proper performance of their duties by the porters, the maintenance of his cars in cleanly conditions, and the observance of all rules both of the Railroad Company on whose line he may be running, and of the Pullman Company.

These things, and a good many more of the same nature, were all explained to Arthur by his comrade, and by the time the people commenced to retire to bed, he felt that he had already learnt a good bit about "rail-roading."

The transformation of a Pullman from a sitting-room with a number of comfortable seats, and no signs whatever of such things as beds, into a long dormitory, with a row of lower and upper berths in each side of the narrow passage, must always be a subject for observation and amusement to the traveller who sees it for the first time. The Pullman of the present day is undoubtedly the product of a vast amount of genius and inventive skill, and the utilisation of space and nooks and corners has here been reduced to a

science ; but notwithstanding these perfections, there is yet ample room for improvement in the matter of ventilation, while a great need of some means of obtaining more seclusion and privacy is plainly apparent.

None but the millionaire and the prima donna can afford their own private cars.

It afforded Vallance a good deal of diversion to watch the nigger in one of the cars deftly turning the seats into lower berths, letting down upper berths from the roof, and taking from the same place mattresses and curtains, jerking out pillows from boxes under the seats, and carrying great bundles of clean linen from a closet at the end of the car.

After a while, the entire car had been transformed into a long, narrow tunnel ; walled on both sides by heavy curtains, which reached from poles just below the roof to the floor. Behind these curtains, into their respective berths, men and women had crept to disrobe themselves as best they could in the narrow space allotted to each, and obtain what sleep the noise and motion of the train would permit.

And now an incident occurred which caused him a hearty laugh. One of the berths near the centre of the car was occupied by a cantan-

kerous old maid, who had been worrying every one with her complaints and snappishness, and had done her best to be as disagreeable to the conductor as she possibly could. Two or three times she had sent for him and demanded that other male passengers should have berths allotted to them further away from her—a demand with which, of course, it was impossible to comply.

One man who especially seemed to have incurred her dislike, was a portly Teuton, occupying the berth adjoining her own. This gentleman, she told the conductor, must be removed to a further distance, because on account of his being so fat she felt sure that he was a snorer, and even if he were not, she could not sleep with a German so near. Like all her other extravagant demands, this was refused, and, at last, wearied and fatigued with the exertion of grumbling, the elderly spinster crawled behind the curtains into her own berth.

At that time, Arthur and the conductor were standing at one end of the car, near the smoking-room, and the former told his companion of the trouble he had had with this passenger.

A little later, the head of the lady in

question popped out between the curtains, and looked up and down. Every one had then retired, and the gas being turned out, except at each end of the car, where it was lowered, the two men were not perceptible.

Satisfied that no one was looking, the grumbler, wrapped in a long shawl, stepped out of the berth and stood in the passage, looking up at her curtains. She seemed to be searching for some land-mark by which to recognise her own little resting-place, and, finally, not being able to see the number on account of the dimness of the light, she extended two skinny arms from under the shawl and pinned a pocket-handkerchief to the centre of the curtain. Then she stepped quickly down the passage, and disappeared into the ladies' dressing-room.

"I'll play a trick on that old girl for the trouble she has given me," said the conductor; "that's an old dodge for marking her berth, so that she will make no mistake. I'll show you a trick of ours when we want some fun."

He walked down the passage till he stood opposite the woman's berth, and unfastening the handkerchief, carried it in his hand to the next berth and there pinned it again on the curtain.

Behind that curtain was peacefully reposing the portly Teuton.

Having successfully accomplished this change in the whereabouts of the lady's landmark, the conductor rejoined Arthur, and the two stood back in the gloom of a dark corner.

A few minutes later they saw the object of their practical joke tripping nimbly down the passage, her hair now spiked with curl papers, and the shawl hanging loosely round her.

She stopped opposite the handkerchief, a grim smile of satisfaction at her own smartness passing over her withered features as she quickly unpinned it. Then, without any more delay, she parted the curtains and clambered abruptly into the bed.

The conductor and Arthur were now so intensely interested that each could feel his heart thumping against his ribs.

For a moment after the woman had disappeared from view, there was a dead silence, but then suddenly there came a convulsive shaking of the curtains, followed by the protrusion of a pair of bare feet, which wildly pawed the air, and several shrill screams accompanied by a deep guttural gurgling.

This, however, had hardly had time to arouse the other occupants of the car before

there was a violent upheaval in the berth from which the sounds proceeded, and the lady bounced out backwards, dragging after her the gigantic frame of the big German, whose deep bass voice could now be distinctly heard protesting,—

"Mein Gott, im Himmel, vot fury ish dis?"

The drollness of the situation was now too much for the gravity of the conductor and Arthur, and both burst out laughing, still, however, keeping in the background.

Heads now peeped out from behind the curtains in every quarter of the car, and a strange sight greeted the eyes of those who had been disturbed.

The huge German, very scantily clad, was sitting on the side of the berth, his bare feet resting on the floor, while the infuriated spinster, wearing only a long white gown, with curl papers sticking out like horns all over her head, was gesticulating violently at him, and denouncing him as a wicked monster. Her long, skinny arms swung wildly to and fro, every now and then coming in contact with the body of her enemy; while he, having just been aroused from a deep sleep, had not yet had sufficient time to collect his thoughts

and try to fathom the mystery of this extraordinary onslaught of which he was a victim.

At last, roused to ire by the continued warlike demonstrations and bellicose utterances of the disturber of his rest, he plunged forward off the berth, and bawled out,—

"Mein Gott, im Himmel! It ish a madvoman dot ish in zee car. Vill you leave me, you madvoman?"

Then, convinced that he had been attacked by a maniac, he yelled out lustily for the porter and conductor.

At this stage of the proceedings Arthur and his friend discreetly retired to another car, while the porter, who had been indulging in a forbidden cigar in the smoking-room, rushed to the scene of trouble, and finding matters in a very tumultuous condition, went in search of his superior.

Then the latter gentleman, accompanied by Arthur, returned, and, boldly approaching the irate couple, innocently inquired what the row was about, and severely reprimanded the old maid for kicking up such a noise as to awake all the passengers.

The lady, however, was not to be intimidated, and promptly demanded that the Teuton should be expelled the car or put off

the train for "the most audacious insult that evil-minded man had ever attempted."

Then the German, in his turn, accused "dot voman vid the horny head" of having sprung, like a wild cat, into his berth while he was asleep, and having scratched his face, and tried to throttle him, finally dragging him out by his beard.

It was a long time before peace could be restored. The elderly spinster insisted that the German was in her berth, and even after she had been shown all her own wearing apparel and other articles in the adjoining bed, she suggested that they had been moved while she was dressing her hair. At last, however, she quieted down, and vowing that she would report all the officials to the company, retired behind her own curtains.

This incident tended to cement a friendship between Vallance and his brother conductor, and the greater part of the following day, which was spent in St Louis, they passed together, Arthur receiving numerous valuable hints and instructions for use in his new career.

Very often to appreciate another man's joke is to make a friend.

CHAPTER II.

A PREDICTION CONCERNING MILLIONAIRES.

"WELL, and how do you like railroading?" asked Miss Blanchard of Arthur Vallance, on the morning of his return to Chicago after his first trip.

"It beats farm pupilling hollow," he answered. "There is none of that fearful monotony and dreary loneliness which are the lot of the plough boy and herder of cattle on the prairies. There is at least something to interest one and something to look forward to."

"There must be something fascinating in life on the rails," said Cora; "for father says that once thoroughly inured to it, men never want to quit it. Old engineers, he says, who think they have had enough, often retire and for a time lead a homely life, but invariably after a few months they come back and ask to be taken on again. They can't live happily without their iron horses."

"I daresay not, as on the whole railroad-men seem rather a jolly lot. Those I have seen are an awfully good sort."

"You will generally find them so; though, mind you, they are a reckless, happy-go-lucky class of men, and take everything more or less easily. There is an epitaph in the cemetery here which reads—

'Here lies the body of Conductor Meares,
Who was crushed under the wheels of the train,
Which he ran for more than twenty years,
But never will run again.

He was courteous, fearless, with temper mild,
And upon the express which he ran,
Once risked his life to save a child,
And three times killed his man.'"

"That sounds rather characteristic," remarked Arthur. "Men must naturally grow a little reckless in a position where there is always some element of danger."

"So I think; though the danger now is infinitesimal compared to what it was in the days of the James gang of train robbers, when trains were stopped and robbed or wrecked two or three times a week. Such things happen now occasionally, though not like they used to."

"Not much chance of a conflict with train

robbers between here and St Louis, I suppose?"

"Oh, such things have happened on that very line, but I doubt if you ever get such a chance to distinguish yourself now. Have you got the revolver I gave you?"

"Indeed, I have. I have always stuck to that."

"As your best friend, I suppose. Well, it is useful to have with you, though I doubt if it is necessary to carry it in your pocket. I should keep it in your valise, if I were you."

"That's what I will do. It is pleasant to know it is there in case of emergency."

"If you should be transferred to runs in wilder regions, it may be best to keep it in your pocket altogether. By-the-bye, directions in regard to your inquiries about your 'Vie' were sent by last night's mails. You see I lost no time."

"Many thanks."

"In a month or thereabouts you will hear. And during that period you must devote your attention entirely to your new occupation. Are you going out again to-night?"

"No; to-morrow night I go out as a full-fledged conductor. My uniform will not be ready till the morning."

"When you return you must come and report your experiences to me. Father, too, will want to know how you are getting on. He always likes to keep an eye on any young man whom he has once started in life."

"Of course you have heard that he has found my friend, Fred Summers, an appointment in a large stockbroker's office here?"

"Yes; I know all about that. Is he pleased?"

"Oh, very. And the other fellows are going to be sent home. Your father, and the Consul, and half-a-dozen Englishmen here have arranged it."

"I know all about that too. I am giving a hop here to-night; I wish you could come. It would give you such an excellent opportunity to see the *élite* of Chicago—that is what they call themselves."

Arthur shook his head.

"I have nothing to come in," he answered. "I have never yet experienced the pleasure of wearing dress clothes, and I should feel strangely uncomfortable among your be-jewelled and silk and satin clad *élite* in these morning things."

"No; you couldn't come in those. Never mind; at a little later date you shall come. I

intend to introduce you to what many of our girls call 'sarsiety,' but we must rig you out first."

"Would a sleeping car conductor be considered a fit person to be received in the *élite?*"

"Yes, when introduced by me, sir. I care very little for the fads and fancies and upstart pride of certain members of this so-called *élite*, but they never take umbrage at anything I do. I am a queen in this house."

"And out of it, too, I believe. Everybody seems to bow down to you and worship you."

"That is the worship of the almighty dollar transferred to me as its principal representative here. Being the only daughter of Mr Blanchard, I should no doubt still have a large following of admirers and friends if I had a face like a pig, a figure like a hippopotamus, and were deaf and dumb, and half-witted."

"Which shows how grand a thing it is to be rich. There must be something in the atmosphere which creates thirst for wealth, for already I find myself longing and hungering for the possession of lands and securities. To be a millionaire like your father, the master of a dozen enterprises, with the enormous

power he wields, must be something worth living for."

"That is a matter of opinion, my young friend. The millionaire in this country is now, I think, approaching his zenith, and ere another century has passed he may have been abolished."

"Abolished?"

"Yes, abolished.

> '*Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,*
> *Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.*'

Many, many evils are hastening over this country on account of the concentration of its wealth in the hands of a few capitalists. Father himself has predicted the eventual downfall of millionairism."

"I am afraid I am not much of a political economist, but I think I can get a glimmer of what you mean by 'hastening evils.'"

"They are easily explained. They mean the total subjugation of the whole land by the wealthy few. Already the United States Senate is virtually under the control of the millionaire, and is largely composed of haughty and arrogant men, who will use their power for their own ends."

"Something like our House of Lords."

"For pride of wealth and contempt of its humbler fellow citizen your House of Lords can't hold a candle to our Senate."

"I had no idea of that."

"It is so; but that is only one evil. Already the State legislatures, and even the judiciary, are more or less under the influence of the giant monopolists who control the financial welfare of the country. At the rate we are going now, the day will come when the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary will be merely the tools of a few millionaires."

"And then, what will happen?"

"Well, when the millionaires have got complete control of the country, when a combination of a few men with hearts as hard as flint, and whose principal characteristics are greed for riches and contempt for poverty, have acquired into their own hands all the industries, railroads, telegraphs of the country, and have even brought the Government and Courts under their thumbs, the end of millionairism will be nigh at hand."

"And how do you expect it to be brought about?"

"By more than ten plagues. When the American public finds that it is gradually being ground down to the condition of the Israelites

under Pharaoh, it will suddenly become equal to the occasion, and many a millionaire will dangle from a lamp-post, and the days of gigantic monopolies, of 'corners' in the necessaries of life, of the continual squeezing of the masses by the few, will be abruptly but permanently terminated."

"And you, as the heiress of a millionaire, are you not afraid?"

"No; I do not think it will come in my day, and even if it should, my father is a popular man, and the greatest friend of the masses in this State. He has never supported 'corners,' nor tried to impoverish others to enrich himself. He is known everywhere for his philanthropy, liberality, and humanity. It is true he has built up a vast fortune, but it has never been built on the wrecks of orphans and widows and his less fortunate fellow citizens."

"And does he really believe this, too?"

"Yes, and he doesn't care. He sees that it will be inevitable. He knows that when, as now, it is possible for three or four heartless individuals to buy up all the wheat of the country at its market price, and then compel the public to pay double that price, a crisis must sooner or later arrive."

"It certainly does look like it; and as in

wheat, so in every other product, I suppose? It seems to me I have often read of a 'corner' in pork."

"Yes, just the same. For the sake of transferring money from the pockets of the people to their own, these men can utilise their vast fortunes in 'cornering' any necessity of life —coal, grain, pork, quinine, cotton, anything that is absolutely necessary to the existence and comfort of man."

"And that is what such enormous accumulation of wealth leads to—to the standing of its owner upon a smouldering volcano."

"Very well put. There is no danger at present, though, of a great eruption. Here and there only smoke is issuing from fissures in the crust, and an occasional deep growl is heard from the depths. The descendants of those men who went to war with the mother country rather than pay a tax of a few pennies per pound on their tea, will certainly rise again when the bonds of slavery, which the absorption of all the country's wealth into the hands of a few is welding round them, have become unbearable."

"And you don't recommend me to try to become a millionaire?" he asked, smiling. "Am I to abandon that ambition which

was just creeping insidiously into my bosom and was first planted there by contact with you and your surroundings."

"It is a long ladder to climb," she answered, "and the foot of it is surrounded by a dense crowd. I advise you to strive to rise in the world to the best of your ability, to force your way above mediocrity, but never to let avarice become your ruling passion. It is the everlasting race for the almighty dollar that makes life so burdensome in this land."

"But you wouldn't like it if your father had not been one of the foremost in the race?"

"I don't know that I should have cared so very much. Of course, to be so rich is very delicious, but sometimes it is rather boring. One of its greatest drawbacks is that it compels one to doubt the sincerity of everybody about one."

"Which must be far from pleasant. Well, on a salary of seventy-five dollars a month there will be no occasion to doubt anyone's sincerity towards me."

"No, perhaps not. But still the day may come. You are very young, and may have a great future before you. Come to us when you are in difficulties or embarrassed in any way."

"I should think I have given you enough trouble already," he answered, looking inquiringly into her eyes, evidently anxious to see confirmed in them the denial which he knew would come from her lips.

She read the look at once, and paused for a moment. Then she said,—

"I think young man, I have said enough, without reiteration. It is a fad of mine to assist you, and to help you on in the world. The more trouble that fad gives me the more I shall enjoy it. Some day, when I have brought you and Vie together, and see you rise to a good position, I shall be rewarded by the thanks of Mr and Mrs Arthur Vallance."

Arthur blushed and looked embarrassed. Why, he did not know, nor could he explain the strange feeling of discomfort which passed over him. He only knew that the mention of Violet Carlisle at that particular moment was not altogether agreeable.

CHAPTER III.

TWO WOMEN.

JOHN BLANCHARD was as good as his word in regard to the affairs of Mr Emerson's fugitive pupils. With only very little trouble, and scarcely any solicitation, the British Consul found himself in possession of a sufficient sum of money, subscribed principally by Englishmen resident in Chicago, to send to their homes in England the four boys who wished to return.

The promptitude with which this money had been forthcoming was almost entirely due to a brief account of the vicissitudes undergone by the youths from Square Mile Farm, published in a daily paper of which the railroad king was a large shareholder.

Mr Blanchard himself had dictated the account, and had stated in it that subscriptions would be gladly received by the editor or the Consul. The result was that more than enough had been forthcoming before night,

and that the paper was enabled to state this fact in its next issue.

So the two Summers, little Phillips, and Arthur Vallance, were the only ones of the late establishment at Square Mile Farm remaining in the States, and each of these was provided with a position, of which the salary, at all events, was sufficient to maintain him in fairly comfortable circumstances.

Acting under the advice of Mr Blanchard, these four rented two bedrooms and a sitting-room between them, taking their meals at restaurants. Harry Summers and Arthur Vallance, of course, being so much on the road had not much chance to occupy these apartments, but they made them their head-quarters, and on their return from their trips always repaired to them. Often, when all four were together for an evening, they would form a little party, and sally forth to some place of amusement.

Compared to the life of drudgery and discomfort, to say nothing of a state of perpetual penury, from which they had recently been released, their new career appeared doubly bright and enjoyable. Neither Phillips nor Fred Summers were overburdened with hard work, for they only went to their respective

places of employment at nine o'clock in the morning. and they were free between four and five o'clock in the afternoon. For Fred, especially, life appeared to have executed a remarkable transformation scene, as the offices in which he worked were replete with every comfort and modern improvement, while his fellow clerks were a jovial and companionable set, ready to do anything to welcome their new comrade, and make him feel at home.

On the whole, it was such a change for all of them that, at first, there was a danger of their appreciating it too much.

No longer did they toil all day in the broiling sun on the shadeless prairie, nor demean themselves to the lowest class of servile labour, without a chance or hope of remuneration, growing morbid and despondent from the dreariness of their surroundings, and the reduction of themselves to mere beasts of burden, but they faithfully accomplished their daily tasks, and experienced a pleasure in doing so.

Arthur Vallance took kindly to his occupation as a sleeping car conductor, and the variety and change which it afforded amused and interested him.

As Cora Blanchard had predicted, he found himself brought in contact with all classes and

descriptions of people, and very soon learnt that the travelling public of America is about the most mixed assortment of humanity ever yet brought together.

However, in spite of the fussiness and irritability of many persons who travel, he managed to pass through his first month with only one complaint lodged against him, and that, after being referred to him, was promptly consigned to the waste-paper basket. It came about thus: two ladies were sitting in a section facing one another, when the younger of them, complaining of the heat of the car, threw up the window by them. Her elderly companion, after regarding the open window for several minutes with a deep scowl upon her face, sharply exclaimed,—

"I cannot possibly stand that draught! I am getting a stiff neck, already."

To which the younger one merely replied,—

"I was nearly fainting when I opened it. How delicious the fresh air feels! I am getting quite myself again."

"Please shut it at once," retorted the older lady. "It may be delicious to you; it will be death to me. There is certain death in such a draught as this."

"There is no draught—nothing but a de-

lightful waft of soft balmy air. I have as much right to have it open as you to have it shut."

"I demand that it shall be shut. I am not going to risk my life for your fads."

"Nor I to die of suffocation for yours. Go and sit somewhere else."

"I sha'n't. I paid for the lower berth here, and this seat belongs to it."

"And I paid for the upper, and this seat belongs to it."

At this moment, Arthur, happening to enter the car, was at once summoned by the older woman.

"Conductor," she screamed, "I insist that you shut this window. "This woman"—great emphasis on the noun—"persists in keeping it open, although I have told her that the draught will kill me. My neck is already quite stiff, and I feel neuralgia coming on now."

"Conductor," cried the other, "this car was quite stifling till I raised this window. Had I not opened it you would have had to restore me from a fainting fit. I must have fresh air."

Arthur looked at the open window, and a smile overspread his features.

"Conductor," reiterated the elderly lady, "I demand that you shut that window. I will not sit in a draught for anyone."

"You can't be in much of a draught, madame," said Arthur, blandly.

"Surely I know whether I am in a draught or not. You don't seem to know that a train rushing through the air creates a draught."

"That depends on circumstances," he replied."

"Of course it does," remarked the younger woman. "There can't be a cold draught on a hot evening like this. It's only fresh air."

"Not much of that, I think," said Arthur, and then, after a moment's pause, he added,—

"You ladies don't appear to know that these cars all have double windows with a space between them, and that you have only got the inner sash opened. Neither fresh air nor draught can come in as long as the outer window remains shut."

To verify his statement he leaned forward and tapped the pane of glass of the outer sash.

Both women looked crestfallen and foolish, but the younger one finally laughed, and asked her adversary,—

"How is your stiff neck now, my dear?"

The other paid no attention, but, turning to Arthur, requested him to shut the inner window.

"I see no occasion to do that," he replied. "It is a great compliment to the cleanliness of our cars, that our panes should be so clean and clear that neither of you ladies could perceive the glass, although, each of you was sure you felt the air coming in. It was both an optical and a mental delusion."

"We have been a pair of geese," laughed the younger woman.

"Speak for yourself," retorted the other, adding to Arthur: "Conductor, I order you to shut that window."

"There is no necessity for doing so, madame," he replied, walking away.

"Then I'll report you for rudeness and neglect of your duty," she cried after him.

His shoulders gave a little shrug as he heard her threat, but he paid no attention.

And a long voluminous complaint did the elder lady lodge against the young conductor, but it caused him no trouble, and only made him wonder at the readiness with which some persons will seek to injure their fellow creatures.

In one respect, perhaps, it was of benefit to him, for the report which he made about it to his superintendent, was so frank, and withal so quietly humorous, that this official, becoming attracted to him, promptly inquired if he thought he could manage a more responsible and heavier run, to which he replied in the affirmative. The following day he was transferred to a train between Chicago and New York.

CHAPTER IV.

NEWS FROM ENGLAND.

About three weeks had elapsed after Vallance's transference to a New York train, when one morning, on his return to the rooms occupied by himself and his friends, he found a brief note from Cora Blanchard requesting him to come to her immediately.

Since he had been running between the "Empire City," and the "Queen of the Lakes," he had not seen quite so much of Miss Blanchard as formerly, for each trip kept him absent four days, and two or three times when he returned he had found that his friend was away on a visit.

The note brought a flush of pleasure to his cheeks, and whistling the latest rage in airs, he hastened to attire himself for the occasion. It was the first time Cora had ever written to him, and the delicate little bit of tinted note-

paper with its tiny envelope, assumed a special value in his eyes.

"You are very obedient to come so quickly when I send for you," said Cora, as she led him to a shady spot under two big trees, where stood three or four easy garden chairs. "I sent for you because I have heard from England, and I knew you would be anxious to know the result of our inquiries."

"I am, indeed," he answered, but his tones betrayed none of that feverish eagerness which might have been expected from the anxiety he had manifested a few weeks ago. "I never could conceive why neither Mrs Carlisle nor Violet would write to me. I suppose now you know?"

"I know why Mrs Carlisle didn't."

"Why?"

"Because she died within a very short time of your departure for this country."

"Died!"

His voice now was full of interest and concern.

"Yes; she was drowned in the river just close by her house. You probably know the spot well."

"It is the river I used to row on. Have they said how it happened?"

"It happened late at night. No one saw her fall in, but it was doubtless an accident, as she had only gone out for a short stroll in the garden by herself."

"And death in all its hideousness came to her so soon—so soon after she had bid me good-bye, and given me advice, and lent me so large a sum of money. It seems scarcely possible."

"*Mors janua vitæ*, Arthur, is a quotation as old as the hills, though I am not sure who was the author of it. I should imagine that Mrs Carlisle had had her full quota of sorrow, and that death was no unwelcome visitor."

"She was as good as any woman that ever lived; but what about Violet?"

"Soon after her mother's funeral, Violet left River Lawn, and went away with some friends who came down there to fetch her. It has not been discovered where she went, or who the people were who took her away."

"And nothing has been found out about her movements since Mrs Carlisle died?"

"Nothing. River Lawn was sold soon after Mrs Carlisle's death, and the woman who was in charge of it during the interval could not be found."

"Poor Violet. I can imagine how heart-

broken she must have been. And who could the people have been who took her away? Mrs Carlisle told me that she had no friends, and confided to me that there was a box containing important papers deposited with a safe deposit company. She asked me to see that this box was in Violet's hands as soon as she came of age."

"There is no doubt a mystery somewhere. That box, probably, contains the solution to it. As I have told you the main facts, you may as well now read the detective's report."

She handed him a letter closely written on two sheets of square paper, which gave all the information the agency had been able to gather.

After he had finished perusing it, he folded it up and handed it back. Then he said,—

"It bothers me to think what can have become of Vie."

Her mother has been dead two years, and where on earth she can have gone I can't imagine. Do you think I ought to go to England to look for her?"

"Not until you are twenty-one. What could you do by going now? You are still a minor, and under the control of your guardian. It is not likely that he will aid you in your

search for a girl whom he forbade you to meet, or furnish you with funds to carry it on. If you return to England now, you will again be obliged to submit to his authority. It will be easier to prosecute your inquiries from here, where you are independent and earning a living. Have you heard from your uncle?"

"Yes; he is the same as ever. Here is his letter. You see he says that, so long as I remain here, he will remit me an allowance of twenty-five pounds a quarter."

Arthur drew a letter from his pocket, and handed it to his companion. It was a curt, snappish epistle, and read as follows:—

"*Dear Arthur,—I have received your account of your infamous uprising against, and treatment of, the gentleman I put in authority over you. I do not believe your story of the cruelties. They are only invented as excuses for giving vent to your wicked, rebellious temper. Personally, I will have nothing more to do with you, but for the sake of your mother who imposed such an unpleasant trust upon me, I shall continue to look after your pecuniary interests until you are twenty-five. So long as you remain in America I will remit you an allowance of*

twenty-five pounds a quarter. If you return to England this will cease, and you will have to submit to my authority and reside at whatever place I decide upon.—Your uncle,

"T. Allen Redwood."

"After seeing that charmingly humane document, I cannot but earnestly advise you to keep your freedom and independence by remaining for the present in this country," said Cora, handing him back the letter. "Stick to your present position, and if the day shall not come when we will make that austere man proud of you, my name is not Cora Blanchard."

"But what about Violet? Surely something can be done to find out what has become of her?"

Miss Blanchard turned her large eyes upon him searchingly, and for a moment seemed to be trying to penetrate his inmost thoughts. She was not quite clear in her own mind whether he had really lost a good deal of his interest in Violet, or whether a wider acquaintance with the world was not teaching him to control and hide his feelings. That he was still deeply interested in his old playmate was plainly apparent, but he betrayed none of

that passionate distress or anxiety which might have been expected in a youth whose lady-love had mysteriously disappeared and could not be found.

Then she smiled at what she considered her own folly, and marvelled that she could have expected so young a lad to be true and constant to his first passion after two years' absence. The loneliness and dreariness of his existence in far-away Dakota might have tended to keep the more romantic episodes of his previous life before him as pleasant dreams to be indulged in again at some future date, and the scarcity of any young members of the feminine sex, together with the coarse masculinity of the only woman near him during his sojourn in the West, would doubtless raise his first love to such an exalted pedestal of perfection, that his worship from a distance would far and away excel his love and admiration when he and she had been constantly together.

But now that he had seen streets in different cities swarming with *les belles Americaines*, and in the discharge of his duties on the trains had come in personal contact with many sweet-voiced and pleasant young citizenesses of the Great Republic, it did not seem reasonable to

expect that his young heart would long remain the property of a girl who had disappeared entirely from out of his life.

No doubt he still surrounded Violet with a certain halo of romance, and should she suddenly re-enter his life, it was quite possible that the former spell would again be upon him; but at present his anxiety on her behalf was likely to be caused more by a feeling of responsibility to the late Mrs Carlisle, by pleasing recollections of days gone by, and by an uncomfortable misgiving that so young and innocent a child might have fallen into evil hands, than by any other considerations or feelings.

Such was the analysis of the state of Arthur's mind, briefly made by Miss Blanchard.

"I think," she said slowly, as though weighing all her words, "that there need be no great fear about Miss Carlisle. Whoever the people were who took her away, they were probably friends."

"Yes, but Mrs Carlisle had no friends," said Arthur.

"That is no reason Violet should not have them after her mother is dead. There are still a few people in the world who do not visit the sins of the parents upon the children."

"Do you suggest that Mrs Carlisle had committed some sin?"

"I can't say. Very likely she was more sinned against than sinning. Still, it must have occurred to you that Violet at some period of her life had a father. Every child must have a father."

"Of course; but a father can die."

"Not only can, but must. But the fact of a man dying is no reason for his widow going and burying herself and her child in a remote corner of the land, and endeavouring to elude the eye of the world. Such a course always gives other women an opportunity for making sinister remarks."

"And the opportunity was not missed. My uncle was one of those who availed himself of it."

"He is the type of man that would. But as we are agreed on the subject that Violet must have once had a father, don't you think it possible that that father or his friends have taken charge of her?"

"I never thought of that, because I have always believed her father was dead."

"Mrs Carlisle never said so, I believe?"

"No, never. She never mentioned him to me."

"But your uncle found an opportunity of saying disagreeable things?"

"Oh, yes; you can trust him for that. He can see no good in anybody who is not an angel."

"And angels are scarce. He was so very determined that you and Violet should be separated, and he was so dead certain that Mrs Carlisle was not a fit person for you to know, wasn't he?"

"Yes."

"Did it ever occur to you that he might know more about Violet and her mother than he would care to tell?"

"What—he? No; never. He was not that kind."

"Stranger things than that have happened."

"No; he is a hard, stern man, with narrow opinions, and old-fashioned ideas; but he is honest and upright. He acts up to his belief, unreasonable as that belief is. No; Vie and her mother never knew him. Mrs Carlisle loathed men of his type."

"But that loathing must have sprung from some cause. That sort of feeling is not inherited, neither does it grow of itself. If she hated men like him, she must have, at some time or other, come in contact with one, and

from that contact had reason to dislike and mistrust them."

"Quite true. But she was a very gentle and soft tempered woman. It was only now and then, and principally by some chance conversation, that she betrayed her dislike of my uncle's teachings. That dislike may have been caused by sympathy with me."

"Possibly. Now, I am going to cross-examine you. Did she ever ask you any questions about your uncle and his household?"

"Yes, often."

"Did she seem to take an interest in his and your affairs?"

"Oh, yes, decidedly. She often used to ask me what was going on at Redwood House, and that sort of thing."

"And you always used to tell her?"

"Yes. It was one of our chief topics of conversation. I had a sympathetic listener in her, and I used to tell her all my grievances."

"Now, Arthur, I'll tell you: I've got an idea into my head that your easily shocked and most proper uncle can tell something of Violet's history. Yes; you needn't look so astonished. I believe that he is in the secret."

"He may be; but it doesn't seem probable.'

"Well, I am not a very old girl yet—not old enough to be weary of telling my age—but I haven't passed twenty years in the company of my father jogging about the globe for nothing, and I'm inclined to think that your uncle could throw a little light on the subject."

"You may be right, but I can't think it."

"Well, we'll ask my father. There isn't a smarter or keener sighted man in town than he, and he'll back my opinion; you see if he doesn't."

"If he does, I'll look in that direction. I'll ask my uncle what has become of Vie?"

"First of all you will need more to act upon than my suspicions. You had better not be too precipitate. I imagine Vie is all right, and may not thank us for any hasty interference in her private affairs."

"But there is that box at the Chancery Lane Safe Deposit Company?"

"I know there is, but it will keep there, unless Vie has already got it. It was evidently put there for safety, in order that some particular person or persons should not get possession of it. It would be real nice if we should tumble upon a genuine sensational mystery. I have rather a *penchant* for mystery."

"And how are we to begin to unravel it?"

"Oh, we'll do it in true detective style. We'll instruct this agency to try and trace her."

"And then?"

"Well, after we've found her, it seems to me that the rest will depend upon herself. We can't make her a heroine in a startling romance unless she is willing to be one."

"I wonder if she ever received any of my letters."

"Ten to one she didn't, or she would at least have replied to the first and told you of the death of her mother."

"Then some one kept them from her?"

"Of course they did."

CHAPTER V.

ARTHUR SEARCHES FOR VIOLET.

SEVERAL months passed quickly by and no more tidings were received of Violet. It seemed as though she had completely disappeared, leaving neither sign nor clue behind her by which she could in any possible manner be traced.

In the meantime, Arthur continued his occupation as a sleeping car conductor, and spent the greater part of his life on the trains travelling from one place to another. Mr Blanchard was true to his word, and every now and then caused him to be transferred to different runs, so that he did not go in need of variety, but, on the contrary, was able to see the United States under fairly pleasant auspices.

With Cora Blanchard, Vallance was still on the same friendly terms, and that young lady's cheerful company formed a very great part of the sunshine of his life. In the winter, when

the railway king took his daughter down to the sunny south to spend a few months in Jacksonville, Arthur's application, backed by a note from Mr Blanchard, to be changed to a southern division and put on a train running into the "Florence" of America, was readily granted. He had now attained thorough proficiency in his duties, and was becoming a popular and well-known man on the road.

In the spring, when Mr Blanchard and Cora returned to the north, Arthur applied for two months' holiday, and, having obtained it, went direct to New York, and sailed thence for Liverpool. He had resolved to make personal inquiries about Violet, and also to ascertain if the box spoken of by Mrs Carlisle was still in the vaults of the Safe Deposit Company. The agency employed by Miss Blanchard having been unable to obtain any further information, had long ago dropped the matter entirely.

The first thing he did on his arrival in London was to call at the Chancery Lane Deposit Company and inquire about the box. The officials there, however, were exceedingly reticent, and it was only after the use of a good deal of persuasion that they consented to look and see if they had anything in their charge belonging to a lady named Carlisle.

The answer was in the negative. There was no such name on their books, and there never had been.

This was a facer for Arthur. He realised that it was impossible the officials could be deceiving him, and yet he felt equally sure that Mrs Carlisle had been in earnest when she imposed that trust upon him, and begged that, in the event of her death, he would look after that box.

Unable to obtain any satisfaction here, he resolved to go down to his uncle's on the following morning, and make his own inquiries in the neighbourhood of River Lawn. He was not going to accept defeat in his search at the first repulse.

Mr Allen Redwood's somewhat long and gloomy visage looked longer and gloomier than ever when, one morning, his nephew strolled into the study, and, holding out his hand, said,—

"How do you do, uncle?"

"You here!" exclaimed the master of the house, turning in his chair and eyeing the big, strong, young man with an undisguised look of curiosity. "You have come back?"

"Yes, uncle, I have come back for a time," was the reply. "Are you glad to see me?"

"You have grown into a big man. I hope your mind has improved as much as your physique."

"I can't say about that; but, uncle, I want you to tell me where Violet Carlisle is."

"Wish *me* to tell?"

He laid great emphasis on the personal pronoun, and his tones rang full of amazement.

"Yes, you. I believe that you know something of the history of Violet's mother, and that you know where Violet is now. I wish you to tell me."

"As I told you long ago, these people were not fit associates for you, or, at least, their style of living at River Lawn indicated that they were not, and, on that account, even if I did know, I should not tell you."

"In the country where I have lived for the past three years, a man dare not take away a woman's character gratuitously in the manner you do."

"It's a pity you have left it, though it certainly has not improved your manners or disposition. I am sorry you are still so headstrong."

"After I have found Violet, and fulfilled my promise to her dead mother, I am going

back there. I have no desire to return to the dreary old life here. I can't help my disposition. You and I may each mean well in our ways, but they are different ways."

"What was your promise to her mother?"

"A secret between her and myself. It would cease to be a secret if I told you."

Mr Redwood walked to the window, looked out, and walked back again.

"Look here," he said, halting immediately in front of his nephew, "for your mother's sake I am anxious to prevent you from ruining your life, if such prevention be possible, and therefore I warn you to pay no heed to any foolish promise made to a scheming woman."

"How do you know she was a scheming woman? You have no right to apply such language to her, unless you know it to be true, which you don't."

"Any woman who would extort promises from a boy like you is a schemer."

"She did not extort a promise. She merely imposed upon me a certain trust in case of her death, and I promised to fulfil it. I am a young trustee, I know; but I intend to accomplish conscientiously what I undertook."

"What was it?"

"I cannot say. It is a secret which, at

present, I must keep entirely to myself. I daresay you have some confidential trusts imposed upon you which you would not reveal to others who had no concern in them."

"Quite possibly; but, you see, I have much concern in everything connected with you. I am, in a way, responsible for your moral welfare, as well as being the guardian of your earthly interests, and, taking everything into consideration, the task is one that sometimes completely bewilders me."

"I don't see why it should. You have never shown such great interest in me that I can quite believe that. You shipped me off to America utterly regardless of what became of me."

"No, I did not. I sent you to America because I found myself unequal to the task of dealing with you, or moulding your character. I had hopes that far away out there, with plenty of work and discipline, and removed entirely from the evil influences here, the sword which I knew to be hanging over you might never fall."

"What sword?"

"You will know all in good time. At present let us drop the subject. You are very

stubborn and self-willed, and will probably pay little attention to an older and wiser head than your own; but I urge you for the present to return to your employment in America, and to forget this silly quest."

"I can't do that, uncle. I gave my promise to Violet's mother, and I shall try to fulfil it. You are older, and may possibly be wiser, but your wisdom is not the wisdom of an acute man of the world. Even I, at my early age, have seen more of the world than you."

"I sent you out to another world for the express purpose that you should learn and be impressed. You have not, however, gained the judgment and discretion I hoped you would."

"Square Mile Farm was hardly the place to gain judgment or discretion. To be handed over to swindlers was scarcely a mode calculated to improve one's moral character. Emerson's was only an institution for the reception of those superfluous boys whose parents or guardians in England wished to dispose of them with as little trouble and at as small cost as possible."

"I may possibly have been duped by him, but, at the same time, I could not take your word for it; for it was to be expected that you

would not like the life, and at first would not quietly submit to a strict discipline. In my opinion, some privation and rigid suppression were essential to your moral welfare. Some means of bringing you into subjection were necessary."

"But, you see, I was not brought into subjection. On the contrary, the Emersons were tamed and subjected themselves."

"That was so much the worse for you. You headed a disgraceful revolt, and incited others to insubordination. You ought to have submitted to anything rather than adopt the wicked measures you did. It is always unpardonably wrong to rebel against those in authority over you."

"Not when they are such creatures as the Emersons. You don't know what we suffered there."

"Suffering is necessary for us all; it is the only thing that can save us from everlasting suffering hereafter; it is the only thing that can avert the eternal doom which awaits the majority of us."

"You believe that the majority of us are doomed to eternal punishment?"

"It is only necessary to look carefully round at all the vanities and crime about us to be

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convinced of that fact; it is only necessary to notice how all the evil instincts of parents descend to their children, to realise what a strenuous and continuous warfare has to be waged against sin. In many cases heredity means predestination to Hell."

"What a fearful doctrine. Oh, uncle, how narrow-minded you are! Do you insinuate, then, that my parents were so bad as to preclude all my chances of salvation? Is that the meaning of what you say about heredity?"

"Your father, Arthur, was not a good man, and did not come of a good family. You inherit much of the evil disposition and tendency to sin of your ancestors. That is the reason you should always be on your guard against temptation. The anxiety I suffer on your account is beyond description."

"And my mother, what about her?" asked Arthur eagerly, paying no attention to his uncle's little homily.

"She was a good woman," was the reply, in a low, solemn voice; "as good as it is possible for a soul clothed in mortal body to be."

"And why should you suppose, admitting that my father was not a good man, according to your notions of what a good man should be,

that his child should inherit all of his qualities and none of its mother's ?"

"The male child is sure to take after the male parent."

"Well, uncle, I won't discuss it with you ; I won't even ask what my father did that was so wrong in your eyes. I can never reduce my mind to placing any faith in your views of life and religion, so let us end this discussion and return to Violet. Other voices have spoken to me, and contradicted your teachings."

"Not the voice of any fair Yankee syren, I hope ?" asked Mr Redwood, with as much of a smile playing round his features as ever played there.

"The voice of a fair syren, the voice of a wise man, and the voice of Nature itself."

"Who are the fair syren and the wise man ?"

"People who have immense power, because they have great intellects and enormous wealth."

"And did they encourage you to come on this wild-goose chase after Mrs Carlisle's daughter ?"

"No ; they did not specially encourage me ; but when they heard of the facts of the case,

of your summary banishment of me to Dakota, of Mrs Carlisle's drowning, of Violet's strange disappearance, and of her never replying to my letters, they thought it probable you could throw a little light on the matter."

"When did you hear of that woman's death?"

"Several months ago."

"How?"

"Through a detective agency which I employed to find out about her."

Mr Redwood seemed annoyed and distressed. He evidently did not approve of his nephew's persistence in this matter.

"And your detective failed to trace the missing girl?" he inquired, after a pause.

"If he had not, I should not have asked you."

"And you have taken up the task in which he failed?"

"I have, and I intend to make a good hunt. I cannot do more."

"Well, I sha'n't interfere with your doing so. I regard it as foolish in the extreme, but after so long a time success is not very likely to crown your efforts."

"Is the wish father to the thought?"

"Scarcely, though I do not pretend to wish

you success. In my opinion, the best thing for you to do is to go back to your employment in America."

"May I stop here for a few days?"

"Certainly; this is your home in a measure. Your aunt will be glad to see you again."

"I am glad of it. She never cared anything about me, but she was never unkind."

"Come along; we will go and find her."

The two went out together in search of Mrs Redwood. Arthur's uncle was still the same quiet, gloomy man as before; but somehow or other it appeared to his nephew as if behind all this reserve and austerity there was hidden a trace of kindness, which could gleam faintly now and then through the cloudy envelope in which he clothed his disposition.

CHAPTER VI.

ARTHUR VALLANCE RELINQUISHES A HOPELESS SEARCH.

A NONE too cheerful week passed at Redwood House for Arthur, and he began to feel a longing to be back again in the busy streets of Chicago, and once more to enjoy the entertaining companionship of Cora Blanchard.

The contrast between life on the rail and life at the old country place in Gloucestershire, was great indeed — too great for a temperament like Vallance's. A bustling activity with a never ending variety were the chief characteristics of the former, while a lethargic inactivity with an unceasing sombre gloom were the principal features of the latter. The young man soon felt that such an existence would speedily become unendurable.

The first three or four days after his return to his uncle's, he spent in making inquiries about Violet Carlisle, and on one occasion stood beside Mrs Carlisle's grave in

the parish churchyard, but he was not able to obtain one atom of information more than had already been procured for him before he left the States. He visited the doctor, and heard from this person's wife a full account of the tragic death of Mrs Carlisle, and the heart-rending grief of Violet; he called upon the rector and listened to the same details over again; but he could not glean a single clue as to whither or with whom the girl he sought had gone. It quickly became evident to him that nothing further was to be done in the neighbourhood of River Lawn.

Mr Allen Redwood apparently took no notice of his nephew's proceedings.

At the end of a week Vallance determined to leave, and apprised his guardian of his resolution. Mr Redwood offered no opposition, but merely inquired when his ward expected to return to America, and if he intended to resume his former employment, to which questions Arthur had replied,—

"I had two months' leave, of which three weeks has passed. I intend to be back in Chicago in time to report for duty when the time is up."

"Then they had a brief discussion about Vallance's monetary affairs, and Mr Redwood

handed his nephew a cheque for a hundred pounds, as the young man begged to be given that amount.

"I am not sure that I am acting right," said Mr Redwood, "in furnishing you with the means of going on this wild-goose chase, or of entering upon a career of dissipation in town, but I do it partly because I wish to inspire you with more confidence in me, and partly because I know you to be so self-willed and headstrong that you would be sure to find other, and less reputable, means of carrying out your purpose."

"Yes;" replied Arthur, "I should find the means somehow or other, you may depend upon it. I am going to advertise in the papers for news of Violet Carlisle. I still believe you could give it to me, but as you won't, my advertisement may meet the eye of some one who will."

"I don't think there is much chance of such a thing, but take your own way. Even when you were a boy I could not influence you or properly control you; it is not likely I could do so now."

"No; your measures were always the wrong ones. You depressed me and harassed my mind, and made my whole nature revolt at

the sternness of your treatment, and at the doctrines you hammered into me."

"I did my best to combat the evil which I knew the laws of heredity had caused to be engrafted in your nature. In taking charge of you, for my sister's sake, I had undertaken a difficult and unpalatable task—a task which knowledge and experience told me could only end in failure and disappointment. You remember those words in the Sermon on the Mount:—

> '*Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*'
> '*A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*'"

"And do you mean to insinuate that I come of such an evil stock that I myself must be evil? You are casting fearful calumny on my parents."

"Only on your father's side. As I have told you he was a bad man—a very bad man. In spite of my belief in the absolute truth of those words about a corrupt tree bringing forth evil fruit, and in spite of my perfect faith in the infallibility of heredity, I did try, at one time, to eradicate and overcome the natural tendency to wickedness which I knew to be in your disposition."

"And by your efforts you made my nature revolt against you and your teachings. Surely you did not expect to save me from the hereditary stain by making me believe that I was outside the pale of salvation?"

"I did not try to impress that on you; I only endeavoured to indicate to you the fearful doom awaiting sinners."

"But you regarded the merest trifling errors as sins."

"There are no such things as trifling errors. Everything must be either right or wrong. And once you lapse into wrong, down you go into worse and worse."

"Do you know, uncle, it seems to me that the limited space in which your mind revolves on these subjects of heredity and eternal punishment, has done much to spoil both your own life and mine. But tell me what sin my father committed to make you so 'cocksure' that even his son must be a black sheep for whom there can be no hope."

"No; that I cannot tell you—at least not at present. It was not my intention to have told you as much as I have already, but our conversation led up to it."

"I think, though, that, after what has been said, I have a right to know."

"I daresay you'll know quite soon enough. At present it is not my intention to tell you."

"So be it. And you will give me no assistance towards finding Violet Carlisle?"

"Certainly not! not even if I were able. As far as it is in my power I must still try to preserve you from evil tendencies and influences. It would not redound to your advantage to find that girl."

Nothing more was said on the subject, and the following day Arthur bade his uncle and aunt farewell, and departed for town.

Here, he soon realised that there was really very little which he could do towards tracing Violet. He interviewed two or three private detectives, but none of them held out much hope of success rewarding their efforts, unless they could be given a little more information with which to start; he advertised in the leading daily papers, but although he received a number of replies, and lost Violet Carlisles seemed to be extremely numerous, he got no nearer to the object of his quest; and finally he offered a reward for any information leading to Miss Carlisle's discovery, but, in spite of a deluge of answers coming from people hoping to secure the money, not

one of them appertained to the young lady he was seeking.

One morning, while walking in the Strand with an American to whom Mr Blanchard had given him a letter of introduction, his companion suddenly remarked,—

"One of us is being shadowed for some reason. Don't look round; let's ascertain which it is."

"Shadowed!" asked Arthur in surprise. "You or I?"

"Yes; I am certain of it. I remember yesterday afternoon noticing the same fellow close to us two or three times, and last night I am sure another fellow was watching us."

"What shall we do? Ask him what he wants?"

"No; he would only say we were mistaken, and he hadn't even seen us. We'll see which of us he is after. You cross the street and go into the Temple, and I'll turn into the Law Courts. You walk some distance through the Temple, and then ask at some chambers or other for any name you can think of, and then come back and meet me, we'll say, in the Divorce Court. Shake hands as if we were parting."

They shook hands, nodded to each other,

and Arthur crossed the street, while his friend sauntered through the gates of the main entrance to the High Courts of Justice. A quarter of an hour later they met again in the Probate Court.

"It's you he was after," said Arthur's friend; "I saw him dodging after you the moment you crossed the street. I daresay he's outside here now."

"If he is, I'll go for him. I'll make him tell what he wants, or who has employed him. I shall know him, for he followed me down the Temple, and watched me go into somebody's chambers. Come along."

The two left the Court, and at the end of the corridor they descried their "shadow" standing at the corner where the passages meet. The man, however, slunk out of sight as they approached, and they did not see him again till they were in the street. Then he was visible on the other side of the roadway, loitering in the entrance of a well-known restaurant."

A few seconds later Arthur Vallance had crossed the road, and following up the man he believed to be a spy, had caught him by the collar with a jerk that lifted him completely off his feet, swung him round, and

demanded, in angry tones, what he was after, and by whom, if any one, he was employed.

So completely taken aback was the "shadow," who was only a very small individual, with a ferret-like appearance, that for a moment he was unable to say anything, and could only gasp for breath.

"Speak, confound you!" exclaimed Arthur, shaking him as a terrier would shake a rat, "What are you watching me for?"

"I—I beg pardon," squeaked the man, I wasn't watching you."

"That's a lie," replied Arthur, twisting his hand into his victim's collar until the man was nearly choking. "We've been watching you. Now, out with it! What's your game?"

"I am not up to any game," was the answer, spoken very meekly; "indeed, sir, you're mistaken."

"Mistaken be hanged!" was the curt response. "I want to know what you're after, or who employed you to follow me."

"Indeed, sir, no one employed me. I wasn't following you."

"That won't do," interposed Arthur's American friend; "you not only followed us to-day, but I noticed you behind us yesterday as

well. Now, let us know what you want. If you're any sort of a detective, you're a mighty clumsy one."

"I ain't a detective. I wasn't noticing you; indeed I wasn't."

"You certainly are not a detective," said Arthur, "but you evidently think you are, and try to be."

At this moment, a policeman arrived on the spot, and shouldering his way through the crowd which had already assembled, inquired what was the matter.

Vallance explained. Then the man gave his version of the affair, which was to the effect that he had never seen either of the two gentlemen, until the taller one seized him by the collar. This was, of course, denied by both Arthur and his companion.

The policeman, turning to Vallance, said,—

"I daresay, sir, as he's one of these private detective coves, but he won't follow you any more now."

"He had better not, or I'll twist his neck."

"He's twisted it already, policeman," said the little man, working his head back and forth to make sure that he was free from that iron clutch, "I've been assaulted for nothing."

"Take out a summons, then," answered the

constable, gruffly, producing his pencil and note-book. "What's your address?"

"I don't want to summon the gentleman," he squeaked quickly; "he's only made a mistake. It's a little hard to be shook up in this way and have one's clothes torn; but I don't wish to carry it further."

"Then be off about your business, which is a very dirty one, I expect," returned the officer.

The man dived through the crowd and disappeared round a corner, while the policeman, turning to Arthur, and at the same time adroitly pocketing a florin bestowed on him cautiously by the latter's companion, remarked,—

"You've given him a bit of a fright, sir, and he'll drop the job now. These fellows never have a bit of courage when they get caught."

"I can't think who can have employed him."

"That's often hard to tell, sir, There's a good many finds use for them coves in these days, now. Sometimes it's a suspicious husband; sometimes it's a jealous woman; there's never any telling. However, sir, you're clear of him now."

Then Vallance and his friend walked away,

and saw no more of the little man who had been the cause of the excitement.

Soon after this incident, Arthur Vallance, finding that it was utterly impossible to obtain any news of Violet, and growing weary of living in idleness in London, departed for Liverpool, and on the following morning sailed for New York.

He was disappointed at the fruitlessness of all his efforts, but he felt that he had done the best in his power, and that for the present, at all events, it would be foolish to expend any more time in a hopeless search.

His two months' holiday would not have been wasted or frittered away, for in that short space of time he would have crossed the Atlantic twice, have seen a bit of London life, and have generally extended his acquaintance with the world.

As he stood on the deck of the steamer gliding down the Mersey, he could not help contrasting his feelings and circumstances, then, to his feelings and circumstances of three years ago, when, in gloomy solitude and with dismal thoughts, he was walking the deck of another steamer also moving down the same river. Things were changed now. He could see life in a brigher light.

CHAPTER VII.

A STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.

IMMEDIATELY after his arrival in Chicago, Arthur Vallance repaired to the mansion in Drexel Boulevard, and asked for Miss Blanchard. The young lady being at home, he was ushered into her morning room, and was soon out in her favourite spot in the garden, busily engaged giving an account of all his doings in England. Cora listened attentively, and when he had finished, said,—

"That affair of your being shadowed confirms my suspicions that your uncle is in the secret of Violet's history."

"So it does mine," replied Arthur; "but there was nothing I could do to prove it."

"No; and I don't see what good it would do if you could prove it. She is probably well cared for if my suspicions are correct."

"What are your suspicions?"

"They are hardly correct for a young lady

to explain to a young man. Prudish people would think me fast to mention such a thing."

"I think I know now. How awfully sharp you are! You believe that Vie is his daughter?"

Cora nodded an assent.

"And Mrs Carlisle?" Arthur continued.

"His victim," answered Miss Blanchard.

"I believe it," cried Vallance eagerly. "If I could prove it, wouldn't I make things hot for him! What a revenge I could have!"

"What is the use of revenge?" asked Cora, shaking her head. "It is the emptiest thing on earth. You may seek it for years and finally obtain it, only to learn that there is no gratification in it whatever. Milton wrote,—

> '*Revenge at first though sweet,*
> *Bitter ere long back on itself recoils.*'

I believe it! I like to hear of the exposure of a humbug, and I like to see wrong punished, but revenge, pure and simple, I don't value."

"Well, then," replied Arthur, "instead of calling it revenge, we will call it the ex-

posure of a humbug. You said, yourself, you would like to expose a humbug."

"I did, and so I would, perhaps, but that exposure might injure some one else; it might hurt Violet. There are so many considerations in this case, when you once really ascertain that she is his daughter, which suggest caution and prudence. He may have placed her in a position where she is well off, and such a thing undreamt of. Why bring down shame on her?"

"I wouldn't do that for worlds. But I would like to be quite sure of her safety, and of the truth of our suspicions."

"So would I. You have done your best, though, and I don't see what more you can do. The fact that you were shadowed makes it almost certain that your uncle meant to be kept informed of every move you made."

"And being such a hypocrite, he will go on as usual deceiving the entire community, and keeping closely concealed the skeleton in his closet."

"You can bet one thing, Arthur, and that is, that that skeleton in his closet has caused him more trouble than you can ever cause him. Imagine what a source of anxiety must be the knowledge that Mrs Carlisle en-

trusted to you some secret. Half his time is probably spent in trying to think what it could be."

"It did seem to distress him a bit."

"No doubt! If what we suspect be really true, he is not having such a glorious time after all."

"He never was a very cheerful individual."

"Evidently not! Maybe he has not much to cheer him. But at present there is nothing to be done but to let him alone. Some day, perhaps, you may come across Violet, and all will be well again. For the reunion of your two hearts, though, I fear you must trust more to chance than anything else."

Arthur looked embarrassed. The phrase "reunion of hearts" did not seem altogether to please him. There was something that jarred upon his feelings in the dogged persistence with which his friend and counsellor affected to believe in the constancy of his first passion. He himself fully realised now that a greater deity than Violet Carlisle had arisen for him. That deity was the girl before him, who was now lounging in a hammock, lazily swinging herself gently to and fro by means of a tiny foot, which at

each undulation of the hammock, lightly touched the ground, and thus supplied the motive power.

He gazed up in her face wonderingly, admiringly, and could not help thinking to himself that she was far superior to the innocent little maiden who had once won all his love, and had formed his sole delight in life. The same influences that had toned his passion for Violet down to warm feelings of friendship, had lifted him up into an unselfish worship of Cora Blanchard—a worship that recognised at once an inseparable gulf between them, and had no further ambition than to be allowed to continue.

A smile flitted over Cora's features as she noted the varying expressions that quickly came and went in the young man's face.

"What are you smiling at?" he asked.

"At your thoughts," she answered, letting her eyes tell of the amusement she was having.

"At my thoughts?" he ejaculated. "Are you a thought reader too?"

"No—only a face reader. I am watching the deposition of one goddess and the enthronement of another. *Sic transit gloria mundi*, or I should say, *feminæ*."

"It happened long ago," he answered boldly, but unable, notwithstanding, to conceal his surprise at her quick divination of what was passing in his mind.

"It has only just been confirmed," she retorted, and then giving the hammock a vigorous swing by pushing the dangling foot hard against the turf, she added: "But now let us be serious; when do you return to your work?"

"To-morrow."

"On what run?'

"I don't know yet."

"Get sent out West a bit; it will do you good."

"All right."

"And after you have been knocking about there for a while, I'll get father to look for something better for you."

"You are awfully good."

"We are not discussing my virtues. It was not our intention to place you permanently in a Sleeping Car Company. Promotion is too slow. We only put you there in order to give you instant occupation, and to let you see something of the world. How is Harry Summers getting on?"

"Very well indeed."

"Father heard from Fred Summers's employers that they like him very much, and find him quite valuable. They say he is real smart. The other boy, Phillips, is doing very well too."

"Yes, he is as happy as possible, and, poor little chap, he was the most miserable of us all at Emerson's."

"Well, you'll form quite a prosperous colony here after a while. Come to dinner to-night, and see father. We are going to Newport for two months next week, so you won't see him again for some time. You must keep on his right side. He was as pleased as possible when I told him that all of you had repaid the money I lent you to start with."

Arthur blushed at the mention of that loan. It brought back vividly to his mind that day on which, clad in his rags and tatters, with his coarse red flannel shirt, and his torn breeches, and unblacked boots, he presented himself in Miss Blanchard's boudoir, and asked for the assistance which she had promised two years previously on board ship.

The reminiscence was far more mortifying than had been the actual experience.

After having spent the entire morning in

Cora's company, he went down to Fred Summers's office, and induced his friend to go out with him.

That evening he dined in Drexel Boulevard, meeting with a hearty reception from the railway king, and leaving late in the night with an assurance that in three months he should change his position of a sleeping-car conductor for a berth in the General Passenger Agent's office of the railroad over whose fortunes Mr Blanchard presided.

On his return to duty he was placed on a run over the Union Pacific between Council Bluffs and Ogden, and here he experienced a strange adventure.

One night, about two months after the expiration of his holiday, he was crossing the platforms which connect one sleeping-car with another, when a burly figure suddenly rose up off the steps and aimed a vicious blow at his head with a heavy club. Fortunately, the rocking of the car spoilt the man's aim, and the blow fell on the iron brake handle, splitting the weapon to fragments. Finding itself disarmed, the figure extended both hands and clutched at Arthur's throat.

The train was then dashing through the dark across the level and lonely prairie, so

that the noise that it made as it cleft through the air, and rattled over the rails, completely drowned the shout which Arthur gave for assistance. The door of each car being closed, he was alone with his assailant on this narrow strip of platform intervening between the "sleepers."

For a moment the surprise and the suddenness of the attack seemed to render him helpless, but, recovering from this, he dropped his hand to his pistol pocket, and, at the same time, backed against the door of the rear car to prevent himself from being thrown off the train.

His pistol pocket was empty; he had left his revolver in a locker where he carried his papers.

Then he gripped his antagonist by the throat, and, without uttering a word, the two engaged in a deadly struggle, each trying to choke the other, and to hurl him from the rushing train.

For a few moments they swayed and wrestled, neither getting much advantage, but both breathing heavily, and straining every nerve and muscle to gain the victory. Vallance, however, managed to keep his back against the door, and thus use it as a buttress, while he

gradually forced his foe round so that the ruffian had his own back to the steps.

Then, suddenly relinquishing his hold of the man's throat, he seized both his wrists, and with a violent wrench succeeded in releasing his own windpipe from the grasp of the would-be assassin. The next minute he had pressed the man back towards the steps, and moving a little sideways from the door in order to get a clear swing for his right leg, he planted a kick in the other's stomach that caused the scoundrel to lose his balance and fall backwards off the train.

For a moment he was so exhausted with the severity of the struggle, and so breathless from the pressure brought to bear on his windpipe, that he could only hold on to the iron rail and gasp. He had seen the figure of his assailant fall off the car into the darkness, and he had heard a deep moan escape it just as it lost it's balance, but the whole affair had taken place so suddenly and so unexpectedly, and the tussle for life had been so severe and had required such almost superhuman energy, that it took him a minute or so to regain his wind and his composure.

In the meantime the train with it's freight of human beings dashed on through the night,

throbbing, panting, clicking and clacking, and leaving a long trail of smoke and sparks to mark it's course.

After a brief pause, Arthur reached to the bell-cord and sharply pulled it down. A whistle from the engine came in instant reply, while the grip of the automatic brakes on the wheels, at the same moment, jolted half the passengers almost out of their seats or berths, and brought the train to a standstill before it had proceeded twice it's own length.

Vallance then entered the car, and hurried forward in search of the train conductor, whom he met hastening in the opposite direction to ascertain who had stopped the train, and for what cause.

In a few brief words Arthur related what had occurred.

"We'll back down and pick him up," said the train conductor, "he may not be dead."

"I expect he is," said Arthur; "he went off with a terrific fall."

"Sarve him right if he is," was the reply; "but in case he only got hurt, we'll take him on to prevent his escape. I've known men to fall off trains without receiving hardly a scratch."

The two had gone out on the platform of the car while talking, and the train conductor,

stepping on to the lowest step and leaning over the side, with his lantern gave the signal to back slowly.

At almost a snail's pace the train glided rearwards, until, when it had retraced its journey about half a mile, Arthur exclaimed,—

"There he is," at the same time pointing to a figure sitting up in the ditch beside the railroad.

The conductor swung his lantern vigorously, and the engineer brought the train to a stop.

Then, accompanied by two brakesmen and a couple of negro porters, they jumped off the car and surrounded the man sitting in the ditch.

"How are you feeling?" asked the train conductor, holding his lantern close to the man's face and peering into it.

"I'm hurt," was the sulky reply.

There was no doubt about the truth of this assertion, for his face was cut in two or three places and covered with blood.

"Can you get up?"

"No, my leg's broken."

"It'd sarve you right if yer neck was broke," was the unsympathetic response. "Maybe the boys 'll break it for you yet with a rope."

"The injured man only growled in reply, and Arthur said,—"I suppose we had better get him into one of my sleepers?"

"The baggage car's good enough for him," returned the other official. "It's as good as the Sheriff will give him. He can lie on the floor or on a coffin case, but his leg ain't broke or he couldn't sit like that."

"It's my ankle," gruffly said the prisoner.

"Well, you'll go into the baggage car, where the baggage master can watch you," said the train conductor sharply, signalling the engineer to back down.

Then the train moved slowly back until the engine and baggage car were immediately opposite the little group at the track side, when the conductor again signalled for it to come to a halt; after which the railroad men lifted up their prisoner and placed him on the floor of the car in company with all the passengers luggage and a couple of coffins.

The sliding side doors were then shut and fastened, and the train resumed its journey.

An examination of the prisoner's leg revealed the fact that no bones were broken, but that the right ankle had sustained a slight sprain. Several cuts and bruises on the head and face, with a bad contusion on the right shoulder, completed the list of injuries received by the man in his fall from the train.

"He would have been well enough to get

away in a few minutes," said the conductor, after one of the negro porters had washed the captive's head and face. "He was a bit stunned at first—that was all."

Suddenly, to their astonishment, the prisoner, who seemed to have quite revived, rose to his feet and seemed about to make an attempt to escape. There was an evil expression in his eyes that betokened mischief, but before he had gone two yards, the train conductor held a revolver to his head and ordered him to hold up his hands. It was one of those occasions on which the most reckless desperado will comply with this very suggestive request, and the ruffian, seeing that he was at the mercy of his captors, raised his hands over his head.

"Tie him down, boys."

A rope was brought, and he was pinioned.

"Where can we fasten him?" asked Arthur. The men looked around the car, but there was very little extra space — trunks and boxes occupied every available spot. There were two coffins in plain deal cases standing in a corner. The conductor looked at them wistfully. The baggage master saw the look.

"Strap him down on the big un," he said. "It's going to 'Frisco. Thar's nobody with it, and the poor fellow inside won't mind."

The suggestion was accepted at once. They dragged their prisoner, who kicked and struggled to the best of his ability, to the side of the larger coffin case and, placing him flat on his back upon it, tied him there securely.

He begged and entreated to be put anywhere else, but the men were obdurate and determined that there he should remain until they reached Ogden. From entreaties he passed on to oaths and curses, and used a good many expressions not known in the Western vocabulary. This attracted the attention of Arthur and the train conductor.

"The dirty loafer is a countryman of yours," said the latter.

"It seems like it," was the reply; "some of his phrases are peculiarly British."

"Well, we'll see how he will like boarding with an American sheriff. He'll have to do a good bit of work for Uncle Sam."

On arriving at Ogden early in the morning, the prisoner was released from his gruesome position, and handed over to the police. He refused to give any particulars of himself whatever, and his defence was that that he had been a passenger on the train and had been standing quietly on the platform when Arthur pushed him off. The fact of his being

a passenger was not denied, for he had in his pockets both railroad and sleeping car tickets, but the right of a passenger to try to kill a conductor was vigorously disputed by counsel for the railroad company; and as remnants of a heavily loaded stick were forthcoming as evidence against him, he was promptly committed to the Criminal Court. During the short interval which intervened between his examination and trial, an effort was made to gain some information as to his antecedents, but nothing could be discovered in regard to him. He had no letters or papers about his person, and his clothes, which were all of good quality and in excellent condition, bore no name or marks upon them.

When, after the jury had found him guilty of "assault with intent to kill" and "attempted robbery on a train," the judge sentenced him to five years in the penitentiary, his identity was still absolutely unknown to the authorities. All they knew was that he was an Englishman.

Just as the warders were leading him away he looked over towards Arthur, and violently shaking his fist, shouted, "I'll remember you for this, when I come out."

Arthur smiled cynically. It would be such a long time before the wretch would come out.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOVE AND BUSINESS.

Some two months had transpired, since the incidents recorded in the last chapter, before Cora Blanchard returned to her home, and gave Arthur an opportunity of relating his adventure. In a letter, written to her shortly after the man's condemnation to the penitentiary for five years, he had given a brief account of it, and had enclosed an extract from a newspaper with a short report of the trial; but no minute details of the affair had ever reached her, and both she and her father supposed that the attack had been entirely instigated by motives of robbery.

But although the jury itself had also taken this view, Arthur had never coincided in it, and the more he thought over the matter, the less he believed his assailant to have been actuated by considerations of plunder; for, in the first instance, he could not overlook the fact that, if the blow aimed at him had taken

effect, he would undoubtedly have rolled senseless off the train, without giving the man any chance even to rifle his pockets; and, in the second instance, in the struggle which followed, all the ruffian's efforts were aimed at choking him and dislodging him from the platform, and never once was any attention directed to his pockets.

In the hurry and bustle of Western life, however, this sort of thing is soon forgotten, and by the time Miss Blanchard returned to Chicago, Arthur had ceased to think about it. At that time he was still running between Council Bluffs and Ogden, but he at once applied to be transferred to Chicago again, and was immediately changed to a run between the "Queen of the Lakes" and Omaha.

His face was beaming with unmistakable delight when, a couple of days after his transfer, he found Cora alone in her drawing-room, and read in her eyes that she was genuinely pleased to see him. To him that simple, unaffected look of pleasure and interest brought a wealth of consolation and happiness.

"So you've been having another adventure," she said, with her usual gaiety. "Really, for a young man brought up in an English village, and forbidden to view the world until you were

cast adrift, you are acquitting yourself very fairly."

"I think so, too," he said, with a laugh, drawing up his tall, athletic figure to its full height.

"Yes," she continued, "you are turning out very well. In twelve months you have killed a nigger, helped to flog two men, burnt down the buildings on a farm, and thrown a robber bodily from a running train. That is an excellent record. Father is as proud of you as if you were his own son, and says he always knew you were made of the right stuff."

"Words of approval from you and him are very welcome."

"Well, we approve of you very much; but I am not going to let father have all the credit of having found you. It was I who first found you. I found you on a steamer on the Atlantic, like Pharaoh's daughter found Moses in a basket on the Nile."

"And you have been just as good as she was. I believe, when you found me, I was quite as helpless as the little Moses."

"Every bit," she answered, with provoking candour, looking quizzically into his face. "You were the greenest youth I had ever seen; and yet there was something sturdy

and something original about you. It makes me feel quite like an old woman when I reflect on the change that has been wrought in you."

"Which you have wrought."

"No; not which I have wrought. I may have assisted to mould you into shape a little, but the material for a first-class man—good phrase that—was always there. I consider you now well on the high-road to success; but you've got to put your shoulder to the wheel yet, young man, and don't you forget it!"

"I am willing. I have never been happy till within the last twelve months. It is you who have made me happy."

"Yes, by giving you congenial work, and a chance to expand your mind," she returned; "and by driving all morbid notions out of you."

"And by letting me see so much of you."

She was gazing straight into his eyes, and could not fail to see the expression which was in them—an expression which could only come into the eyes of a man overcome with passion for the woman at whom he was looking.

"Don't get sentimental," she said, with a smile. "No sentimental young man ever succeeded in life yet, except as a poet, and I am sure you can't write poetry. At present

you still remain my *protégé*, my Moses, and I forbid anything approaching romance, sentiment, or the like."

"All your forbidding couldn't prevent my loving you."

He spoke it out in a bluff, manly way, but his cheeks coloured like those of a diffident girl.

"You're coming on, young man," she said, smiling, but not betraying the least shade of annoyance, embarrassment, or feeling of any kind. "Having displayed your prowess in the rougher walks of life by killing a nigger and chucking a robber off a train, you are now going to try your hand in a game of softer nature, and make love to a woman eighteen months older than yourself. I am greatly interested in you, but it is a motherly sort of interest."

"That is all I desire," he replied. "I wish things to remain as they are now. I want to be with you often—to talk to you, to listen to you, and to love you. I never expected anything else. I am quite willing to give my love in exchange for your friendship."

"It is rather a one-sided sort of arrangement," she answered; "but if you persist, it must be so. The day will come, when you

are a few years older, when you will meet some girl of a more suitable age whom you will really love. Then we shall laugh at these days. You see I'm your 'second.'"

Arthur blushed again.

"Yes," he said; "but I was a child then, and I had never seen any one else. Poor Vie! I wish I knew what had become of her. I am still her sincere friend, but I love you."

"Well, if you do, you mustn't talk about it any more. It isn't so bad to be loved, but it's unpleasant always to be hearing about it. I hear such a lot of it. It's a wearisome tale."

"Do you? Yes, I suppose you do."

"Indeed I do. And when father thinks any one is bothering me, he gets real angry. He hates the fortune-hunting 'masher.'"

"I should imagine he would."

"Indeed he does. The other night there was a man of the real 'masher' type here, who has teased me to marry him a good deal, and so now I never see him if I can help it. Father was sitting inside the window, and we were on the piazza, for I was sitting there when he came. This man, sentimental as usual—he doesn't care a dollar for me, really, only for my dollars—said to me, 'Do you remember that night we sat on the beach by the roaring waves in

the silver moonlight? I was happy then. But in a few moments you wrecked my life. I implore you to re-consider your decision.' Before I could say anything, father put his head out of the window—this man had no idea he was there—and said savagely, 'Young man, you'd better go back to your beach by the roaring waves in the silver moonlight, and stop there. It will be safer for you; it will prevent a total smash up of the wreck you speak of.' That man hasn't been here since."

"I should think not," said Arthur. "But I shall never aspire to what he aspired to. That never entered my thoughts. It is too far beyond my reach for me even to dream of. Sleeping-car conductors don't marry heiresses and daughters of railroad presidents."

"Any one in this country may aspire to marry any one," replied Cora, somewhat inconsistently. "We have no caste here. Father was away down below a sleeping-car conductor once, and he doesn't forget it. If a man acts like a gentleman, and is square, honest, and pushing, he draws no line. What he hates is an idle loafer, rich or poor. In the matter of birth you are far above him, although, of course, we don't care a cent for that."

"I don't see that birth is of much use in the struggle for existence or success. It hasn't helped me yet."

"No, and it never will. I remember thinking that to see a well-bred youth like you, clear headed and naturally intelligent as you were, utterly ignorant of any means by which you could earn a dollar, and unable to help yourself in any way, was one of the most painful sights I had ever seen. But you are far beyond that stage now. See that you always proceed."

"There isn't much danger of my retrograding as long as you are at hand to prod me on."

Cora laughed.

"You mustn't need prodding on," she said. "We haven't a horse in our stable that requires a whip. Neither of us will have them. I am authorised by father to offer you a place in the General Passenger Agent's Office of the Chicago and South Western Railroad. Your salary will be one hundred and twenty-five dollars a month, and when you travel—which you will have to do a good deal—you will be furnished with passes over the roads, and your other expenses will be charged to the company."

"I accept," he cried, eagerly; "upon my word, you are the noblest woman on earth. Is it any wonder that my first little love for Vie should yield to a greater and grander love for yourself?"

Cora shook her head, and started the hammock into another rapid swing.

"Love must always be kept separate from business," she said, teasingly. "We were talking business, and you have no right to throw in a lot of irrelevant remarks about love. If you go on at this rate you'll be fit for nothing but a fifth-rate poet, and a very poor one at that. You accept the position?"

"Indeed, I do."

"Then, send in your resignation to the Pullman Company to-night."

"I'll do it."

"And come and see father after dinner. The President of the Lake Shore Railroad is dining with us, but as he leaves for New York at nine o'clock, you'll find us alone after that."

"Thanks."

"And now you must be off, for I am giving a hen luncheon party, and you'll be surrounded by a bevy of maidens if you remain."

Arthur rose from his seat, raised the girl's

hand to his lips, and took his departure. Providing that no one could see, the act of kissing Cora's hand was a little bit of homage which he never omitted to pay when meeting or leaving her, and it was an act to which she never made any demur. She knew that in his eyes she was a queen, and the kissing of the hands of queens has been a custom from time immemorial.

CHAPTER IX.

A "CORNER" IN WHEAT.

That night Mr Blanchard had a long talk with Arthur Vallance, and confirmed the young man's appointment to a vacant post in the office of the General Passenger Agent of the Chicago and South-Western Railroad. It was, he told him, a post from which he might rise to be a very high railroad official, and all he had to do was to keep his eyes and ears open, pick up every scrap of knowledge he possibly could, and thoroughly perform his regular work.

"You are adroit at adapting yourself to circumstances," he said, "and you are bright and intelligent. Your future should be in your own hands."

When, after this interview, Arthur took his departure, Cora walked across the lawn with him, and as soon as they had got clear out of earshot of the house, she abruptly asked,—

"Arthur, have you ever speculated?"

"No, never," he replied, in astonishment. "Fred Summers does a little bit now, but I never have."

"Have you any money?"

"Oh, yes; I have got over a thousand dollars. I haven't spent any of my guardian's allowance."

"Would you like to have a little 'flutter' in a certain speculation?"

"Yes; if you recommend it."

"And, if I tell you something, you'll keep it perfectly dark, and not tell a soul?"

"On my word of honour."

"Then, look here," she said, laying her hand gently on his arm, "take your thousand dollars to the office in which Fred Summers is, and tell them to sell wheat for you to-morrow morning at the opening price."

"To sell it?"

"Yes, you are to be a 'bear' on wheat. You have read all about this big 'corner' in wheat; you know a gang of speculators have bought up all the Chicago wheat, or think they have, and have forced the price to nearly double its normal value?"

"Yes, I have read about it; the papers are full of it."

"Well, father and this man who was here

to-night, and several other capitalists, have organised a powerful combination to smash the 'corner,' and the biggest railroads in the country are at their backs."

"How jolly!"

"And to-morrow, as soon as the market opens, their brokers are going to commence to sell heavily, and half-an-hour later a raid will be made on the market which must inevitably break the ring manipulating the 'corner.' Father said to-night, that it was so weak-kneed already, it must topple over when an attack was made. He expects to make a million or two, for he has been going 'short' of wheat for several days."

"How delightful for him!"

"Oh, he doesn't care for the money much; but he's dead opposed to 'corners,' because they hurt the poorer classes so. Now, to-morrow, you do as I tell you. Sell wheat for all you're worth."

"I will."

"But remember, this is an exceptional case; you are not to become a speculator. You are never to speculate without my leave."

"I never will. I promise that."

"It's a perilous game for outsiders, and frequently leads to disgrace and ruin, but, in

this particular case, you're an insider, because father and the President of the Lake Shore have been discussing it during dinner, and I know all about it."

Then she bade him good-night and returned to the house.

The next morning Arthur accompanied Fred Summers to the broker's office in which the latter was a clerk, and depositing with it a cheque for his thousand dollars, he asked the firm to sell wheat at the opening of the market. Fred Summers also, being advised by Arthur, though not knowing the source of his information, followed his example, and sold the little golden grain.

Arthur stood by the "ticker" in the office and awaited developments. Punctually at ten the business commenced on the Board of Trade—the greatest wheat exchange in the world—and for a few moments matters seemed comparatively tame and quotations steady.

"We have sold for you twenty thousand bushels September wheat at a dollar and five cents, on five cents margin," said the chief clerk to Arthur a few minutes later, and then indeed the lad's eyes glared at the little white tape which kept on slowly uncoiling and, dotted with figures and letters, crawled snake-

like from under the glass dome which covered the "ticker." He felt then that he was a real speculator, and, like the great railway king whose daughter he worshipped, had an interest in the market. Proud and jubilant he stood by the instrument, never for one moment doubting the fulfilment of Cora's prediction.

Presently the clicking of the little printing telegraph became more rapid, and the snake-like tape uncoiled itself with greater speed. It seemed to Arthur as if millions of bushels of wheat were being sold at a dollar and five cents, and his little block of twenty thousand looked insignificant when he saw recorded single sales of a quarter of a million over and over again. Then he reflected joyously that these sales must be made by the combination headed by Mr Blanchard, and at the same time he realised that some very powerful clique must be purchasing. Still, his confidence never wavered.

After twenty minutes of intense excitement he at last saw the quotations begin to fluctuate. From a dollar five they fell to a dollar and four cents, and then to a dollar and three, only to go back at a single jump to a dollar and five, and up to a dollar and six.

This was followed by a sale of one million bushels at a dollar and four cents, and another million at a dollar and two cents, and then the "ticker" clicked away as hard as it could click, but did not seem able to get the quotations out fast enough.

Every one in the office, the members of the firm not on the floor of the Exchange, cashiers, clerks, were now surrounding the several instruments. It was evident that a terrific conflict for supremacy was in progress between the "bulls" and "bears."

The excitement was intense even in those few rooms, for this was one of the firms employed by Mr Blanchard, and it had been one of the first to open the combat by offering huge quantities of wheat. For some little while longer the prices were maintained around one dollar, but all at once three million bushels were recorded as changing hands in a single sale at ninety-eight cents, and from that moment the market gave way, and quotations fell as though they were going to nothing. The clique that had "cornered" wheat was completely routed, and a panic prevailed on the Board of Trade.

Now, indeed, the bears had it all their own way, and they continued to force prices down

until finally wheat was selling at sixty cents. Then the "covering" of "shorts" ran it up again as high as seventy, but this reaction was speedily followed by another "slump," which carried it down to fifty-eight.

"I shall cover now," said Fred to Arthur; "you had better do the same."

"All right, tell them to do it, will you?"

The order was at once telephoned across to the Board, and after a short space of time, during which quotations bobbed up and down between fifty-five and sixty-three cents, word came in that Arthur's sale had been covered at sixty. He had made forty-five cents per bushel on twenty thousand bushels—a clear profit of nine thousand dollars.

Then, indeed, he felt that he had tasted the sweets of speculation, and that once more he was laid under the greatest obligations to Cora Blanchard.

A suggestion was made to him by one of the brokers that to buy a hundred thousand bushels at the price prevailing at that moment would be bound to return a magnificent profit, for there must, his adviser said, be a sharp reaction upwards before the close of the market, as the bears did not intend to hammer prices again that day; but Arthur remembered his promise

to Cora, and declined to avail himself of the opportunity.

It was well for him, too, that he did so, for just as the prices were steadying and the excitement slightly abating, a rumour became current on the floor of the Exchange that two big city banks, which had been supporting the "corner," were in difficulties, and the consequence was that the improvement was lost, and there was no recovery during the afternoon. The report turned out to be true, but gave only a small part of the casualties suffered in the ranks of speculation that day, for the total list next morning showed that two Chicago banks, one Cincinnati bank, four heavy operators in the wheat markets, and eleven firms of stockbrokers, to say nothing of a long array of smaller dealers, had been financially slain in the battle. Who the victors were was not so generally known, but Mr Blanchard and several other noted millionaires were credited with having added largely to their fortunes, and, at the same time, with having rendered the country a service in smashing up a combination, whose object was to enrich itself at the expense of the public, by doubling the price of the chief necessity of life.

Arthur's delight knew no bounds. The

world itself seemed to have changed in the last twelve months, and to have revealed to him a new and brighter side of life. In twenty-four hours fortune had smiled so favourably upon him that he had been promoted to a comfortable appointment in a large railway company, and his little stock of ready money, amounting to two hundred pounds, had multiplied itself into two thousand.

Late in the afternoon he hurried off to Drexel Boulevard to tell the goddess of his good fortunes the happy result of his operations, but he found that she already knew about the breaking of the "corner" and the subsequent panic, for the greater part of the day had been spent in her father's private room, and in that room there were half-a-dozen different "tickers," which recorded quotations from the principal bourses and exchanges of the world, and printed indelibly on their white tapes all important items of news from every part of the hemisphere.

"I see that you have done well," said Cora, as Arthur was shown into the room; "I have been sitting beside the "tickers" in father's study half the day, and know all about it. The excitement on the Board must have been grand."

"You are a magician—a clever, beautiful magician!" he replied, letting his eyes frankly tell the admiration which he felt for her; "you raise a poor devil up out of the gutter, out of a miserable, hopeless existence, and, by saying a few words, you place him in a very comfortable position, and then, later on, by a few words more, you put him into a much better appointment, and show him a way to convert a couple of hundred pounds into a couple of thousand."

"And that is what you call magic, you silly boy," she answered, laughing. "That is only influence, power, and interest—the influence and power of my father, and the interest I take in you. So you have made ten thousand dollars?"

"Not quite; but my two thousand is now ten thousand, less the broker's commission."

"A very good deal. Many have risen to-day, and just as many have fallen. Father and his syndicate have smote hip and thigh that other syndicate which thought it was going to control all the wheat in the country, and quadruple the price to sixty-five millions of people. Yesterday it was boasting wheat would be two dollars a bushel in another two weeks. To-night it is grovelling in the dust."

"What a lot your father must have made."

"A pile, I expect. But he hardly needs it, and you'll see that he will show no sign of gratification or pleasure. By-the-bye, you are to assume your new duties to-morrow. Did you know that?"

"No."

"Well, you are. And, remember, no more speculation, young man. Next time I hear of anything certain from father I will let you in the secret; but if you commence on your own account you will be ruined in no time. Your ten thousand dollars will dissolve like ice under a summer's sun."

"What shall I do with it?"

"I'll ask father to tell me a good investment. You must invest half of it, and keep the other half ready in case we hear of any real good speculation."

They remained together for another hour, and then Arthur departed to meet Fred Summers and Phillips. The chief topic of conversation all over the city that night was the dissolution of the big "wheat corner," but it was two or three days before the full extent of the damage done was known, and then it was ascertained that two of the leaders of the clique who had made the "corner" were the presidents of the two banks which had failed,

and, as these had fraudulently used all the resources and deposits of their institutions to sustain the price and buy all the wheat that was offered, they were afterwards prosecuted, each receiving five years' imprisonment in the penitentiary.

From that day fortune seemed to smile more beamingly than ever upon young Vallance, and his life became comparatively free from troubles.

It took him some time, it is true, to get into the routine of his new work and to acquire the necessary knowledge of it, but day by day it grew easier for him, until, at last, he experienced no further difficulty, and was able to attend to his duties with the confidence of a competent man, and with that sturdy independence which had marked his behaviour ever since his appointment to the post of conductor in the Pullman Company.

He found also that he was making a large circle of acquaintances; for, being a frequent visitor at the mansion in Drexel Boulevard, he was continually being introduced by Cora to her friends, and these, seeing him in such company, naturally invited him to call, and sent him invitations to entertainments of all kinds.

In fact, he gradually developed into what is frequently called a "a society man," and became a familiar figure at all the principal social events.

His life, however, still had plenty of variety, for very often he was sent on long journeys through different parts of the States, and invariably found himself treated as a person of importance, and made the recipient of numerous courtesies from railway officials in other towns.

With Cora Blanchard he continued on the same friendly terms as before, being one of her most constant companions. Frequently these two went to the theatres and opera together, availing themselves of that charming feature of American social life, which does not recognise a stern and inflexible necessity for the everlasting dogging by an austere duenna or a mother of the steps of its maidens. Very often, also, they drove out behind Cora's favourite pair of trotters; and sometimes, too, she mounted him on one of her father's horses, and accompanied him on a ride into the country.

In his new prosperity he did not forget his friends, and, at his instance, Cora asked her father to find Harry Summers a better berth

than that of sleeping-car conductor, the result of her plea being that Fred and his brother were soon working in the same office.

Occasionally Arthur found a good opportunity for increasing his little capital, for Miss Blanchard, every now and then hearing from her parent of some predicted movement in the stock market, always at once conveyed the information to her young English friend, who never failed to act upon it, and invariably benefited by doing so.

Every moment of his life now seemed to be filled with some congenial employment. He was made a member of a well-known club, he joined a gymnasium in order to keep his muscles in trim, and he spent several evenings every week at a business college, improving his acquaintance with American commercial methods.

CHAPTER X.

ANOTHER STEP.

During the next four years very little of moment occurred in the lives of any one concerned in this story. Prosperity seemed to have come to them all, and apparently intended to remain. The two Summers and Phillips were steadily rising in their respective occupations, and for them fortune's barometer stood steady at "set fair."

As for Arthur, his lucky star was undoubtedly in the ascendant, and he was now universally recognised as a rising man. It was known by every one that he was a favourite of Mr Blanchard's, and this in itself would have been sufficient to ensure him a certain position in life, but, in addition to that, his own sturdy character, his restless activity, and indomitable perseverance, his general "smartness" and personal popularity were conceded, by all who knew him, to be infallible elements of success.

Besides, it was known that in several "deals" in stocks and grain, he had been crowning one success with another, and had already amassed a small competency.

In this respect, Cora had indeed been the goddess of his fortunes, for whenever she could extract from her father any information as to any movements in the markets which had little or no chance of failure, she always took her friend into the secret, and told him to make use of it. The railway king never revealed to any one except his own partners in his transactions what he contemplated doing, but it is more than probable that a shrewd suspicion as to the cause of his daughter's sudden interest in speculation existed in his mind, although, seeing that nothing he told her ever leaked out, he made no demur to her secretly aiding his young English *protégé* to take a little money out of the market for himself.

There are a few men in the States to whom speculation is not speculation—it is certainty. These men are such giants in the precincts of Mammon, and such powers in the temples of speculation, that when they take the markets in hand they can do as they please. Cora's father was one of these men; albeit it was

recognised in his favour that he had never been known to stoop to the dishonourable tricks of manipulations, to which some of his *confrères* were wont to resort.

In the five years which had elapsed since his heading of the rebellion at Square Mile Farm, Arthur Vallance's physique and character had changed almost as much as his fortunes.

In figure he was straight, square-shouldered, lithe-limbed, and over six feet tall, with biceps and a chest that were the envy of many a man in the gymnasium. To add to his manly appearance, he had succeeded in growing a moustache that almost completely hid his mouth, while there was a pleasing look of frank good-nature, with an air of fearless resolution, that was extremely attractive. He had the reputation of being the best boxer in Chicago, and he was known to be as expert with his revolver as with his fists.

But there was one feature about him that had undergone no change—his devotion to Cora Blanchard. In that respect he was just the same as when he had told her, years ago, that he loved her, and that he did not aspire to anything greater than to be allowed to continue to do so.

During all these years he had been as faith-

ful to her as a Newfoundland dog to its mistress, had sought to be in her company as much as possible without becoming a milk-sop, and often avowed his love in a frank, unsentimental manner that seemed rather to please and amuse her.

Never once had he hinted at such a thing as a desire to marry her, and never once had he attempted to become romantic or melancholy. He recognised her as the origin of all his good fortunes, and marriage seemed almost too commonplace for the esteem and admiration in which he held her.

And she, on her part, treated him with the easy familiarity of an old and trusted friend, and often boasted, in a joking manner, that when she had first met him, although she believed he was made of good material, she never hoped to raise him into such an excellent young man. But there was one thing very certain, that, in spite of her light-hearted manner towards him, she never let slip an opportunity of doing him a good turn, and never failed to make his interests one of her foremost concerns.

And this was made manifest when, at the expiration of four years after Arthur's appointment in the General Passenger Agent's Office of

the Chicago and South-Western Railway, Mr Blanchard's private secretary died of influenza, so that the millionaire was compelled to look round among his *employés* for a man in whom he could repose the utmost confidence and trust. He made no mention of the matter to Cora until after he had attended the funeral of his late secretary, a man who had been his intimate friend as well as his confidential man of business; but a day or two after that event, while at breakfast one morning, he said to his daughter,—

"Cora, I don't know whom to take in poor Jordan's place. I must have a man whom I can trust implicitly, and who can keep his mouth shut to all comers. Whom do you recommend?"

Probably Mr Blanchard had an inkling of what the answer was going to be, for he smiled, as, without a moment's hesitation, his daughter replied,—

"Arthur Vallance."

"He would not be a bad choice," returned the millionaire; "but his own position is now almost as good, and he might not care to accept this."

"I accept it for him," she answered promptly "It will suit him exactly."

And thus it was briefly settled, without Arthur's knowledge, that he was to assume the duties of confidential secretary to Mr Blanchard. The change was decidedly welcome to him, for although he might not be quite so independent as hitherto, the office itself was a valuable prize, and there was one consideration which overbalanced all others, and that was that wherever Mr Blanchard and his daughter went, there also would he go."

Those charming business and pleasure trips which the railroad president, accompanied by his daughter, so often made to various parts of the country in his own luxurious private cars, would no longer mean separation from Cora, for henceforth, in these same private cars, there would be a compartment also for him. In future he would be as one of the family, except that when in Chicago he would continue to sleep at the apartments he still occupied in company with the Summers, and Phillips. To whatever part of the world Mr Blanchard might go he would have to accompany him; and it had been an established rule in this household ever since Cora had been left motherless at the age of ten, that wherever her father travelled, there also did his only child travel.

It did not matter where he went, why he went, or to what distance he went, but whenever he left home for more than twenty-four hours his little daughter, attended by her maid, and whatever dog might be chief pet at the time, went with him, and tyrannised over him.

In his private railroad car, which was really two cars connected by a vestibuled platform, the accommodation provided for her was far superior to that provided for any one else, although the whole suite was a model of luxury and comfort. The first of the two cars consisted of half-a-dozen apartments, used as bedrooms—of which Cora's was more than twice as large as any of the others—two servants' rooms, and a bathroom. Miss Blanchard's room, however, had its own private bath, concealed in a large mahogany closet with bevelled glass mirror doors, which looked like a wardrobe until it was opened, and revealed a perfect little bathing-room, fitted with all necessary furniture, and supplied with hot-water pipes connected with the kitchen in the next car. On one side of her room was that of her maid, and on the other side that of her father.

Next to Mr Blanchard's was the apartment allotted to his secretary, and the other two

rooms were used for any guests or officials who might chance to be accompanying them.

The second car contained an exquisitely appointed saloon, a compartment used as an office by the president, a smoking-room, a kitchen, and quarters for the cook and porter, and at the rear end was a broad, carpeted, observation platform, which was used very much as a verandah to a house, and from which, as the railroad king's cars were always placed last on the train, a splendid view of the country through which he passed could be obtained, as well as a good inspection of the track.

Shortly after Arthur's appointment as private secretary, Mr Blanchard started on his annual tour of inspection over the entire system. This was a jaunt that generally lasted eight or nine weeks, and which, although really made for business purposes, invariably assumed the character of a long pic-nic.

The vice-president, the general manager, and the general superintendent, always took part in this trip, but the two last had a private car of their own, while the first occupied one of the spare apartments in Mr Blanchard's car, the other spare room always being given to some young lady friend of Cora's.

The first fortnight of this tour passed off delightfully for Arthur, who began to feel as if he had been suddenly transported to a paradise on earth. This ceaseless change and activity, with its varying scenes and its rather Bohemian style of life, suited him well, and the joy of always being in close proximity to his dearest friend raised him into the seventh heaven. He had not much work to do just now, and had plenty of time to idle away with Cora and her friend. Sometimes they would travel during the early part of the evening, sitting out on the observation platform as happy a group as could be found anywhere; at other times they would have the cars side-tracked at some pretty little wayside village, and remain there for a day or two; and occasionally they would halt for a few days at a large town, and put up at one of the hotels, in order that the cars might undergo a thorough cleansing.

One evening, a few hours after the party had reached Kansas City, and taken accommodation at an hotel up on the hill, Arthur strolled down to the Union Depôt to give some instructions in regard to the cars. He had not hurried himself to get there, and when he arrived, he did not hurry himself to return,

but stood on the platform talking to the negro cook. Presently a messenger boy hastened towards them, and inquired of the darkie if those were Mr Blanchard's private cars.

"Dat's what dey is, sonny," said the cook. "Who's dat note for?"

"Arthur Vallance."

Arthur took the note, and, on opening it, found only a few words from Cora asking him to come back as soon as possible and take her to the theatre.

"It's odd that she should suddenly decide to go to the theatre like this," he soliloquised, as he stepped off the car, and hurried to the entrance of the depôt, where he jumped into a cab, and ordered the driver to take him to his hotel.

When he arrived, he found Cora fully arrayed for the theatre, and was merely told to make all the haste possible in getting himself ready.

As evening dress is not indispensable at Kansas City theatres, his preparations occupied only a brief space of time, and in less than twenty minutes after his return, the two were seated in a box watching the performance. Cora's young lady friend had remained at the hotel with Mr Blanchard.

For a few moments after they were seated, Arthur regarded the play with but little attention, and more often than not his eyes were fixed on his companion, who was busy studying the programme. He could not quite fathom her strange whim for rushing off to the theatre in this unexpected manner, especially as of late she had become severely critical in regard to plays, and declared that more than half of those produced were absolute trash.

Presently, however, he gave a perceptible start, and his whole attention became riveted on one of the characters.

CHAPTER XI.

VIOLET REAPPEARS ON THE SCENE.

For several minutes Arthur stared hard and fixedly at one of the principal actresses, then he took Cora's glasses, and looked through them steadily and for some time.

"Let me see the programme," he said to his companion, who had been intently watching him.

"Is it she?" asked Cora, paying no attention to his request.

"Who?"

"Vie?"

"I am almost certain it is. Much taller and plumper and older looking, but I believe that girl is Violet Carlisle."

"The programme says so, at all events," she remarked, handing him the paper in question.

He scanned it quickly. There was a short list of names, and amongst them was that of his long missing friend.

The company was an English one, of which

Mrs Sydney Crakes was the leading lady, and next to her in importance came Miss Violet Carlisle.

"How strange," he said dreamily, in a low tone, "and now after all these years we are going to get at a solution of the mystery. And she is an actress now!"

"And a very good one, too," rejoined Cora. "She's one of the coming lights of the stage. I like her better than her leading lady."

"So do I," he answered. "I suppose before the performance is over I had better send her a note. She hasn't recognised me yet."

"No, I don't think she has quite convinced herself of your identity, but she has observed you, and is trying to study you as well as she can. And now at last two long parted hearts will be reunited."

She smiled as she made the latter remark.

"That would be very strange," retorted Arthur, a slight tinge of sarcasm sounding in his voice.

"'*'Tis strange—but true; for truth is always strange—stranger than fiction*,'" quoted Miss Blanchard.

"It would beat the records of either truth or fiction if that ever came to pass," he answered seriously. "We were children when we last

met. No doubt, poor girl, she has found some one else to care for her—some one whom, perhaps, she loves nearly as much as I love you."

"You ought to be off with the old love before you get on with the new. The old love is watching you from the wings."

"My love for you is five years old; that cannot be called new."

"She is very beautiful," murmured Cora, watching Miss Carlisle as she once more walked to the front—"very beautiful."

"She always was. When she was sixteen, I used to think her a dream of beauty."

"How old is she now?"

"She must be twenty-three; that was over seven years ago. I am over twenty-four."

"And I am nearly twenty-six—quite an old maid some of the Chicago girls say. Now, of course, you and Violet must meet at once. How is it to be arranged?"

"I can write a note here in pencil, and send it to her."

"What a romance! meeting thus after seven years."

"I don't feel romantic over it. I am very glad, indeed, to find her, but there is no romance or sentiment in it. A man cannot

serve two masters, neither can he love two women."

"I believe that is a point open to dispute. At any rate, they often love one and marry another."

"I grant that. And some can love and never marry at all."

"Write your note, and get it taken to her. I want to see the effect," she answered, somewhat abruptly, as if she wished to cut short the conversation.

Arthur tore a leaf out of his pocket-book, and having written a few lines upon it in pencil, folded it up, and gave it to an usher to be delivered at once.

A liberal tip ensured the promptness of its arrival in the hands of Miss Carlisle.

"She has received it," said Cora, twenty minutes later. "Her eyes are beaming with delight, and she can hardly remember her lines for excitement. See how she glances over here."

"She does look pleased," answered Vallance, looking at the pretty young actress who was now so close to their box that she could have spoken to them in an ordinary voice. "Poor girl; I wonder what history she has to relate."

"One not quite so adventurous as your own, I hope. Aren't you eternally indebted to me for bringing you here?"

"I am eternally indebted to you for everything. There is nothing that I have; not an atom of my present prosperity; not a ray of sunshine in my life, that has not come from you. But how did you know that she was here?"

"It was only a guess. I saw one of the bills of this company up in the hotel, and when I saw the name of Violet Carlisle, I wondered. Then I noticed that the company was English, and that lady had come from England to tour the States. That may be our Vie, I thought, and I thought right."

"You did. You are awfully smart, Miss Cora. You seem to have a special talent for divination. Correct ideas seem to jump to your head without a moment's thought."

"Here comes your reply."

A knock sounded at the door of the box, and an usher entered and handed Arthur a note. It was from Violet, and merely said that she was stopping at the St James Hotel, and would expect to see him there as soon as the performance was over."

"At all events my gift of divination didn't

apprise me of the fact that we were stopping at the same hotel," said Cora. "You must introduce her to me, and she shall come and have supper with us. I am just dying with anxiety to speak to her, but I won't be so callous-hearted as to intrude on your first meeting. I will give you ten minutes for refreshments—I beg pardon, for explanations I mean."

She spoke jestingly and lightly, and yet he fancied, somehow, that beneath the surface of the levity, there was an undercurrent of gravity not often discernible in her.

During the rest of the performance, they only spoke at intervals, and then in low tones. Cora was occupied in watching Violet, and she could not fail to perceive the numerous inquisitive glances which the young actress cast at herself.

Half-an-hour after they had left the theatre, the meeting between Arthur and Violet took place in the drawing-room of the hotel.

"I had long ago given up all ideas of ever seeing you again," said Miss Carlisle, her voice sounding full of reproach. "It is seven years since we met, and you never wrote a line—in spite of all your promises. Never a line!"

"Never wrote a line!" he exclaimed; "never wrote a line! Why; I wrote over and over again both to you and your poor mother, and not a word in reply did I receive. At last, I gave it up in despair."

"Where did you write?"

"Always to River Lawn."

Violet's eyes flashed fire, and the expression in them revealed to Vallance that he was talking to a girl with a temper of her own.

"More foul play," she said; "how they lied about the letters! Did you hear about mother?"

"Yes; but not until after we had put a detective agency to work to find out what had become of you?"

"Who are we?"

"The Blanchards and myself. That young lady you saw with me to-night is Miss Blanchard. I am secretary to her father, who is a great railroad man."

"And they tried to help you to find me?"

"Yes; indeed they did. They have literally made me what I am now. Five years ago I was a poor creature in rags and tatters, with hardly a shilling. Now, I am quite independent, and hold a first-class appointment.

I have every thing that a man can want. They gave it all to me."

"They must be very nice," she murmured; "and you were reduced to rags and tatters?"

"Yes; it is too long a tale to tell now. That girl you saw with me to-night, induced her father to get me a place in the Pullman Company, and they gradually helped me on till I got to be what I am now."

"You are looking very well. You have grown to be very immense and very handsome."

"And you, Vie; are you getting along all right? It seemed so strange to see you on the stage."

"Yes; I am doing very well now, but I have had my share of trouble. After mother died, and you had gone, I felt as if I didn't want to live."

"You know I came to London to look for you? I went to Mrs Carlisle's grave, too, when I was in Gloucestershire, inquiring about you."

"That was nice of you. Couldn't you hear anything about me?"

"Not a word. I advertised in the daily papers, but although dozens of Violet Carlisles were offered to me, not a word of information about you ever came."

"There was something very mysterious

about my mother and me, it seems, but different to what I was told, I fancy."

"What were you were told?"

She drew herself up as if she wished to increase her height, and, with head erect, and flashing eyes, looked unflinchingly into his face as she replied,—

"I was told that I was an illegitmate child —that my darling mother was never married."

For a moment Arthur was nonplussed and embarrassed. This was the very conclusion to which he and Cora had both come, and yet it seemed as if the girl before him expected that he would repudiate the idea with scorn and indignation.

"It was a most infamous thing to say—a diabolical thing," he answered hotly, after a pause, and he felt keenly what he said, for true or not it was a cruel thing to say to a girl brought up as Violet had been. "Who said it?"

"Mrs Yorke."

Then she gave him a brief account of Mrs Yorke's sudden appearance at River Lawn, and her own subsequent return to London with that lady.

After she had finished, Arthur said,—

"It is all very mysterious, but I have some ideas on the subject, which you shall hear to-

morrow. In the meantime I have promised Miss Blanchard to take you to supper with her and her father in their private rooms. We always have supper after the theatre."

"I'll come. I want to meet that Miss Blanchard. She must be a girl worth knowing."

A few minutes later Arthur conducted Violet Carlisle to a cosy room, where Mr Blanchard, his daughter, and his daughter's young lady friend, were awaiting their company at a very substantial midnight repast.

"You seem like an old friend to me, Miss Carlisle," said Cora, pleasantly, shaking hands with Violet. "It's seven years now since I first heard of you, and many a serious consultation have Arthur and I had about you since."

"Seven years?" said Violet, I thought you had known him only five."

"No, it's five years or more since he turned up at our house after the fall and destruction of Square Mile Farm, but the first time I met him was on board ship just after he left Liverpool. After our arrival in New York I did not see or hear of him for two years."

Then Mr Blanchard shook hands with the young actress, and suggested that they should sit down to supper.

Violet did not now attempt to give Arthur

any further particulars of her career, but promised that he should hear everything in the morning. She told him, however, that the company with which she was travelling was booked for a twelve months' tour of the "States," and that, so far, they had been in the country only six weeks, and therefore had yet more than ten months to remain.

"We are going everywhere," she said; "to California, to the big Canadian towns, to the South, and every large city in America."

"And your company is doing well?" asked Mr Blanchard.

"Splendidly, so far," she answered; "we have only played in a few places yet—Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and a few others; and have drawn immense houses. We expect, of course, to do best in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Boston, but we don't go East till towards the end of our tour."

"That is strange," he replied, "I believe most foreign companies start in New York."

"We couldn't get the dates, I believe, so our manager arranged it this way. We are booked for a month in Chicago, just eight weeks from now."

"That's real nice," exclaimed Cora, "we shall all be back there then."

CHAPTER XII.

VIOLET'S STORY.

On the following morning, Arthur and Violet met by appointment, and duly related to each other their respective histories.

Miss Carlisle told in full the incidents attending her mother's death, and everything that had happened to herself up to the time of her departure for the Continent with Mrs Yorke.

Having arrived at that stage of her story, she paused for a few minutes, and then continued,—

"That journey to the Continent was really the dividing line between two epochs of my life. When I crossed the channel I placed a vast gulp between myself and my past, and I entered into an entirely new existence. For over three years we remained abroad, and I took singing and dramatic lessons in Paris, and when we returned to London I studied hard for a dramatic career. I had made up my mind to go on the stage, for my life was very

dreary. Mrs Yorke was kind and attentive, but, oh ! so dreadfully *bourgeoise*. I couldn't stand her for ever. Then Mr Knox, her brother, was such a cad, and they both tried to marry me to their nephew, who was a fearful snob. Another thing that worried me was the mystery surrounding my money matters. I never could make head or tail of them. I don't mean that I ever was short of money, for I wasn't, but I never could find out how much I had or was going to have, or where it came from, or anything about it. What my mother had left, so far as I knew, was not nearly enough to bring in half the income I was allowed to spend. I teased Mrs Yorke and Mr Knox about it continually as I grew older, but they always put me off with frivolous replies, and treated me like a child. But one day, just three years ago now, Mrs Yorke and I had a quarrel, and in her anger she said to me,—

"'You needn't put on such haughty airs. You are nobody except the illegitimate child of a man who has got a better woman for a wife than ever your mother was.'

"For a moment I was dumbfounded with surprise, then I am afraid I did rather an unlady-like thing. I rushed at Mrs Yorke, seized her by the throat, and shook her fat

body till it made the china on the sideboard rattle. Then I released her throat as she was choking, and grabbed her by the hair, but just as I was going to drag her out of the room, the whole head of hair came off in my hand, and Mrs Yorke, as bald as a billiard ball darted into the passage and upstairs. I know it was a horrible thing to do, but I couldn't help it. How dare she asperse my dead mother?"

"I think you served her quite right," said Arthur. "I admire you for it."

Violet smiled her thanks, and resumed her story,—

"Of course, after that I left the house at once. I had a good sum of money about me, and more in bank, for I had never used what my mother had left in the house at River Lawn, and I went out at once and took apartments. Several small engagements at theatres had already been offered me, but I had refused them, hoping for a better one. Now, however, I at once accepted the best I could get. I ought to have said that poor old Martha had died while we were abroad, so that I was deprived of her services in these trying circumstances. For three days after my departure I heard nothing from Mrs Yorke, but on the fourth day Mr Knox came on an errand of

peace, and made overtures to me to return. I told him never, not even to escape starvation. He urged, and pleaded, and offered every apology on Mrs Yorke's behalf, but I wouldn't listen. Then he said, 'In that case, I am instructed to hand you fifty pounds every quarter day; but I must tell you that this is a matter to be kept strictly secret, and that it will be to your interest to say nothing about it to anyone.' Of course I asked him whence it came, but he declined to tell. Then I asked, 'Is what Mrs Yorke said true? Am I an illegitimate child?' 'Women are fools,' he replied sharply, 'and my sister is the biggest of them all. She had no business to say such a thing.' I asked again, 'Do you deny it, or do you confirm it?' He replied, 'Your father is a gentleman of high position. You must never try to seek him or to worry him.' 'Then my mother was not married to him?' I asked again. 'No,' he replied, 'I am afraid not. You have no legal claim on him.' 'I don't believe you,' I answered; 'but I'll never touch a penny of that money. Take it away.' He had placed ten five-pound notes on my table, but although I insisted on his removing them, he refused. Next morning I did them up in a large envelope, sealed it, and left it at his office.

After that he called on me a few times, and urged me to accept this allowance and leave the stage, but I declined, and finally he ceased to come. The rest of my story is brief and void of much incident. I got along splendidly on the stage, and have never been out of an engagement, and, to tell the truth, I wouldn't give it up now for anything. It is the sort of career that suits me. I was never made to dawdle out my life in a country village or in in a Bayswater villa."

"Of course," said Arthur, "it is plainly apparent that Mrs Yorke and Mr Knox were acting for some one."

"No doubt; they must have been acting for my father. Why they should have kept your letters from me, though, I can't imagine. Mrs Yorke was a regular spy, although not an unkind one."

Then Arthur told Violet the story of Mrs Carlisle's entrusting to him a duplicate key of a box she said she had left at the Safe Deposit Company's vaults, and her charge to him to see that, when her daughter came of age, that box should be opened by them and the contents examined.

"That box contains the secret of her life,' exclaimed Violet. "We will have it yet."

"It is not there—at least not under the name of Carlisle," replied Vallance. "I have already been there about it."

"That is odd," she answered, looking inquiringly into her companion's face; "then, do you think she had some other name?"

"She was only a mere child when you were born."

He spoke in a quiet, apologetic tone, that made his words convey more meaning than might appear on the surface.

"Yes, only a child; almost the same age as I was when she died. Things seems different to me to what they did formerly. Three years on the London stage have taught me a few things. I can believe now what would have driven me wild to think before."

"Miss Blanchard and I both have the same idea. Would you like to hear it?"

"Yes."

"We think that my uncle is mixed up in your affairs."

"Mr Allen Redwood?"

"Yes."

Violet jumped up from the sofa on which she had been sitting beside Arthur, and walked straight across the room and back.

"You are right," she said, halting opposite

Vallance, who had also risen on seeing the girl's excitement, and placing one hand lightly on his arm, "he is; I believe it, too. I am sure of it now, though I never thought of it before."

"What has made you think so?"

"Because, when I went to Mr Knox's office with that fifty pounds, I met Mr Redwood in the entrance, and when he turned round and saw me he started, and looked surprised. I had never seen him but once, and shouldn't have recognised him if he hadn't given such a start. I wondered why he did so, but supposed he remembered having seen me while I was at River Lawn. Two or three times since then I have noticed him alone in a box at the theatre where I have been acting."

"My uncle at the theatre?"

"Oh, yes; he hides away behind the curtain of the stage box. Now, I believe he came on purpose to look at me."

"So do I. He would never go for the sake of seeing a play, for he hates the theatres, and denounces them as demoralising."

"Poor, narrow-minded man! But let's get to the point now. What do you and Miss Blanchard think he has to do with my affairs?"

"We think," said Arthur slowly, laying his hand gently upon one of hers, which was now resting on the back of a chair, "that he is your father. It was Miss Blanchard who first thought so. There are many things which made us suspect it."

"Well," she said, with a shrug of the shoulders, "I would rather it was almost any one else, but I can't help it. It is not a matter in which a poor girl has any choice, though she has to share the ignominy. I would like to get at the truth of the whole matter now."

"If we can get that box, wherever it is, we shall have the truth."

"Perhaps he got it."

"He may have, but I doubt it."

At this moment Cora Blanchard entered the room, and asked Miss Carlisle to lunch with her that afternoon.

"I see you are still discussing reminiscences," she said cheerfully.

"We were just discussing something very important," said Arthur. "We were discussing how to get that box."

"Have you told Miss Carlisle my suspicions?"

"I have."

"Then I'll tell you my idea," said Cora; "instead of demanding Mrs Carlisle's box, demand Mrs Redwood's."

"Mrs Redwood's!" ejaculated Miss Carlisle.

"Yes," replied Miss Blanchard, "Violet Redwood's. Then perhaps you'll get it. When Mrs Carlisle told Arthur that box was at the Safe Deposit Company's vault it was there, and she either omitted purposely, or forgot to tell him of the name under which she had placed it there."

"I don't know," said Vallance; "it takes rather a wide stretch of the imagination to believe that she would tell me where the box was, and not in whose name it was. Such an omission would completely nullify her purpose in telling me."

"Short-sighted creature," returned Cora; "don't you see that she was afraid to tell the name to you, but undoubtedly meant to reveal it to Miss Carlisle?"

"You are right," cried Violet, "for she said that she had an important matter to tell me, and something was certainly weighing heavily upon her mind."

"That is the solution," continued Miss Blanchard. "She told you, Arthur, expect-

ing of course that you would never try to get the box without the presence of her daughter, and in that case it was not necessary for you to know the name, and very much safer for her that you should not do so. It was quite sufficient for her purpose that Miss Carlisle should be told the real name."

"But why have told me at all?"

"Because she wanted your promise. I think it was real smart of her to act just as she did. The only drawback was that she met her unhappy fate before she had summoned up resolution to tell her daughter. Had it been any other name but that of Redwood she would probably have told you."

"It will be some time before we can get at the truth," said Violet. "I am under contract to stay with this company for twelve months, and cannot possibly go to England before. So, whatever the box contains, it must remain there some time yet."

"It certainly would not be worth while to sacrifice an engagement like yours," said Arthur.

"Oh, no," returned Violet, "that would be impossible. Besides, for good or for bad, for better or worse, I am irrevocably wedded to my profession now."

"And a mighty good husband it will make you," said Miss Blanchard.

"So I think and hope. All my ambitions and aspirations are centred in it."

"I don't see why we could not try to get that mysterious box over here without any one going for it," remarked Cora thoughtfully. "Why not put our heads together and try to devise some scheme?"

"It would be difficult," answered Vallance, "very difficult, on account of it not being in Mrs Carlisle's own name, and our not being able to produce any authority. How is Violet to prove that she has a right to it? There was no Violet Redwood. It seems to me it will be an impossible task, and we can't get the assistance of any courts."

"I daresay not," returned Cora, "but we can get the services of an eminent firm of solicitors in London, which has often done business for father. Suppose Miss Carlisle wrote an order for the box, signed it Violet Redwood, and sent it over with the key and a letter from father to these solicitors?"

"But about the signature?"

"I daresay she can imitate her mother's writing sufficiently well. Besides, the order coming through a firm of such high standing,

and this firm being able to produce the key, and the box having been for seven years unasked for, I fancy the Deposit Company will be quite willing to give it up, especially when they are offered cash payment of all arrears for storage."

"And suppose the whole idea turns out erroneous, and there is no box in such a name?"

"Then there is no harm done. These lawyers will return the order and the key to father, and tell him that it must be at some other vaults. I have faith in the scheme myself, and I think, as no harm can be done by it, it is well worth trying."

"And we will try it," said Violet. "I can write exactly like my mother used to, and although I have never seen the name 'Redwood' in her handwriting, you couldn't tell my 'Violet' from hers. I second the resolution."

"Which is carried unanimously," said Cora. "Father will arrange about the solicitors, and in the meantime we shall only need a little patience to await the result."

And then Arthur was obliged to go and attend to Mr Blanchard's business, and Violet and Cora were left alone.

CHAPTER XIII.

ARTHUR MEETS AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

The railway president's little party remained in Kansas City three days longer, and then once more established its home on the private cars and proceeded westwards, and at the same time the company with which Miss Carlisle was playing concluded its engagement on the banks of the Missouri, and wended its way to St Joseph.

These three days had sufficed to cement an intimate friendship between Cora and Violet, and, in a certain measure, to re-establish the old familiar relations which had previously existed between the latter and Arthur Vallance. Not that Arthur ever showed any signs of a renewal of those feelings which, seven years ago, he had regarded as an undying and everlasting love, for this was far from being the case; but there was a free-and-easy, unromantic affection between them which was very similar to that of their earlier

days, except that it appeared to have been shorn of all passion and sentiment.

No allusion had been made to the juvenile wooing and cooing which had once taken place between these two; and when they bade each other good-bye at that dirty and stifling hole called the Union Depôt, it almost seemed as if, by mutual consent, they had agreed to relegate to oblivion those little love scenes and vows enacted and made at River Lawn so many years ago.

Just, however, as they shook hands for the last time, a wistful look, so transient as to be almost imperceptible, entered into Violet's eyes, as she said,—

"Good-bye, Arthur. Write me a line occasionally, to say how you are getting on."

Momentary and fleeting as was this expression, it did not escape the notice of Miss Blanchard, who was standing by, and who, putting her hand on Violet's shoulder, bent forward and kissed her, saying,—

"When you come to Chicago, I shall expect you to stay with me. Both father and I will be so pleased to have you. And then we'll arrange all about that London business while we have you in the house. I shall look forward to your visit."

"Thanks, so much," said Violet, her eyes beaming with gratitude, and glistening too with something like crystal moisture. "You have been very kind to me; but, in your kind-heartedness, you must not forget that I am an actress, and therefore held by some people to be without the social pale. I daresay lots of women visit at your house who would be unwilling to meet me on account of my profession."

"I don't think so," replied Cora, "because we American women are not made of any such shoddy stuff as that; but if there are any people of that kind visiting at my house, the sooner they commence to stay away the better I shall be pleased. We have no snobbish or prudish social distinctions in Chicago, my dear, and don't you forget it. You are as much, probably more, a real lady than I am, and no one dares to cavil at me. If you will come and stay with me, I will make you the sensation of the town."

"That is a great inducement," replied Miss Carlisle, smiling. "I will come and learn what it is like to be a sensation."

"You will find it is not so bad after all."

And then they were obliged to part, for Mr Blanchard approached them, and said banteringly,—

"Now, young ladies, I am afraid I must break up this parting scene. 'Tis one of the irrevocable rules of my roads that trains never wait for ladies to say good-bye, for if they did, they would always start two or three hours late."

"Don't mind my father," said Cora to Violet; "he is always making fun of women travelling. He thinks that only women do silly things on the road."

"Well," said Mr Blanchard, "no man has ever yet asked me what time the ten o'clock train would start, though it is a common sort of question for the lady traveller."

"Perhaps it is," replied Cora, "but a man just asked me if I could tell him which was his train, and I replied, 'None, they all belong to the railroad companies.' Then he said he meant to ask which was the St Louis train."

"Well, come along. I daresay men are very queer sometimes. I shall hope to see you at our house in Chicago," he added, turning and shaking hands with Violet. "We never hurry any one there; but here it can't be helped."

A couple of minutes later the train started on its westward journey, and Violet walked about the station alone, until she was joined

by some other members of the company all ready now for the short run to St Joseph.

"I like your Violet," said Cora to Arthur that evening, as they were sitting out on the observation platform enjoying the fresh air. "She is a very sweet girl, and very beautiful."

"She is awfully pretty," was the reply, "and I expect she'll become a celebrated actress. She says she is wedded to her profession."

"That is what they all say, when they are enjoying the sweets of first success. Still, travelling on tour like she is doing is a very hard life. She would be better off if she married and settled down."

"You are very funny, Miss Cora; with the coolest *sang-froid* you prescribe matrimony for your fellow-women as a safe and certain antidote to all troubles, while for yourself you regard it as a deadly poison to existence."

"It is a difference of circumstances and temperament—Violet is gentle and loving, and would make an excellent wife; I am masterful, exacting, and independent, and would want to run the whole show. Violet has no fortune of her own and cannot be married for her money, while marriage to a man of means would relieve

her from the incubus of earning a living. I have such an immense fortune coming to me that I must necessarily regard with distrust any man who wishes to share it, and to become chancellor of my exchequer. You have quite got over your old love for your Vie?"

"You know that. It was only a boyish passion."

"Has she quite got over hers for you?"

She spoke in a tone laden with significance, and Arthur looked up surprised.

"Why, yes," he said, "neither of us even alluded to it. We were just like brother and sister who had met after a long absence."

Cora was just about to make some remark when they were joined by her young lady friend, and the conversation changed at once.

For another five weeks they journeyed over the country stopping at various places, and making this business trip a species of pic-nic. At last, however, they turned their faces homewards, and a special train, halting nowhere, except to obtain water or change its engine, dashed along over the rails for three days until it once more landed them in the "Garden City."

The next morning Mr Blanchard and his secretary were again immersed in the regular

routine of business. Later on Mrs Crake's theatrical company also arrived in Chicago, and Violet found herself a guest in the marble palace of the millionaire, and soon realised that Cora's promise of making her the sensation of the day was in a fair way of fulfilment.

No one, as she had hinted might be the case, frowned on her young hostess for receiving her as a guest and making a friend of her, but, on the contrary, numbers of people hastened to call, and she found herself receiving invitations to every event of importance. Of Arthur, of course, she now saw a good deal, and although she was always bright and cheerful in society, and acted her parts on the stage with vivacity and brilliancy, it soon became plainly apparent to Cora that there still existed in the innermost recesses of her guest's heart a strong lingering fondness for him who had in days gone bye been her boy lover.

But Cora was not the only one who speedily became a fast friend of Violet's, for Mr Blanchard himself daily grew more attentive to the young actress, and entered into her business affairs with zest and zeal. At his instigation, Violet imitated, to the best of her ability, her

mother's handwriting, and wrote an order upon the Safe Deposit Company for the delivery to Messrs March, Smartt, Wells & Keep, solicitors, of the box deposited with it many years ago by Violet Redwood, and this order he forwarded to London with a long letter urging these solicitors to do their utmost to get this box, and enclosing the key which Arthur gave him.

So friendly, indeed, did he become to Miss Carlisle, that one day his daughter jokingly informed him that she drew the line at having a stepmother in the house, whereupon the cute millionaire shook his head, smiled pleasantly and replied—

"The courses of love are running in very crooked and harrowed beds just now in this house, my dear."

"What can you know about such a thing, father?" ejaculated Cora in amazement. "It is the first time in my life I have ever heard you mention the word love."

"I have a heap of things to attend to, my girl, but I am not buried so deep in them that I haven't time occasionally to cast an eye on affairs at home. I can see as far as most people when I look, though I may not waste much time staring about."

"And what have you seen lately?"

"I've seen a middle-aged man grow greatly attached to a young girl—a girl younger than his own daughter—but I've seen in that girl's heart the rekindling of an old flame for a former lover, and I've seen the former lover joyfully become the slave of another girl and close his heart to his old love. That's what I've seen, Cora."

The rich man spoke lightly and flippantly, but withal significantly.

"And that's as far as you have seen at present, is it?" asked Cora.

"That's as far as I've seen at present."

"Well, father, I guess you had better not try to see any further. You have seen far enough."

"Is there any further to see?"

"Now, father, I used to think that what you didn't know wasn't worth knowing, but don't you go about trying to be a heart-reader, because, if you do, you'll find it very much more puzzling work than presiding over railroad companies; and you'll take a long tumble in my estimation when you turn out to be a dismal failure."

Mr Blanchard laughed.

"You're very pert, Cora," he said, regarding his daughter with proud admiration, "but

there's one thing to be said for you, and that is that you are pre-eminently fitted to take care of yourself. I never experience the slightest anxiety in regard to your welfare or future."

"Quite right, dear father; but I shall not rejoice in the same freedom from solicitation on your behalf if you commence to neglect your daily business for the society of my young lady friends. Do not forget that, as a millionaire widower, you are still *le grand prix* of Chicago society. I have reigned supreme here too long now to submit to be ousted by a stepmother."

"It would take a good many stepmothers to oust you, I guess. But, of course, this is all fun. I cannot help thinking though, Cora, that you yourself are drifting towards a certain goal, and while I have no opposition to offer to anything that may tend to your happiness, I hope, before you take any definite step, you will fully consider everything."

"Father," she exclaimed, a deep blush suffusing her cheeks, "you have been dreaming. You are getting quite romantic. You have never spoken to me like that before."

"I have never had any occasion," he answered, smiling.

Then, without saying another word, she stooped and kissed his forehead, and quitted the room.

A couple of days after this conversation between Cora and her father had taken place, an incident occurred which tended to set Arthur thinking. One morning he had been visiting several brokers' offices in connection with Mr Blanchard's business, when the strange behaviour of a man on the opposite side of the street caused him to think that he was being followed. To make certain, however, he wandered about in a circuitous way, dodging into one street, and then into another, invariably to find that when he remained in any office for a few moments, the individual who had attracted his attention was watching outside.

Satisfied on this point, he crossed the road, and walking briskly after the person, who, on seeing him approach, had commenced to move away, suddenly met Violet and Cora coming from an opposite direction. As he stopped to speak to them, he noticed that the object of his attention had halted in the doorway of a tobacconist's shop, and was again suspiciously watching him.

"Wait a moment while I speak to that man, will you?" he said to the two ladies, at the

same time turning sharply away and hurrying to the shop in question.

As he turned into the entrance of the establishment of the vendor of cigars and tobacco, his pursuer stepped up to the counter and asked for a box of cigarettes. Before the salesman had time to serve him, however, Arthur had seized him firmly by the collar, and demanded what he meant by his strange behaviour.

For reply, a malignant look of hatred escaped the man's eyes, and his hand dropped to his pocket. The next minute he was lying on his back in the street almost under the wheels of a tramcar, the cause of his sudden and undignified change of position being a right-hander from Arthur, which had taken him under the jaw, sent him flying through the open doorway, and landed him at full length flat in the middle of the roadway.

Before he had time to pick himself up, Arthur had followed, and was standing on the curbstone.

Then a small crowd collected, a policeman arrived, and hearing Vallance's story, and seeing him in company with Miss Blanchard and another young lady, walked the injured man to the police station.

Arthur had recognised the man as his assailant on the Union Pacific nearly five years ago, and had apprised the officer of this fact.

The next morning the magistrate ordered the prisoner to find security for his good behaviour for three months, and on his insolently refusing to do so, gave him one month's imprisonment, and told him that during his incarnation strict inquiries would be made into his antecedents. Both police and magistrate believed him to be an Anarchist.

"I don't like that man cropping up again in this way," said Cora to Arthur, at dinner the evening after the inquiry before the police justice. "It looks as if he were bent on mischief. Only out of a prison a month, and after you again."

"If he comes after you again, you had better use your pistol on him," said Mr Blanchard. "This kind of thing gets monotonous after a time."

"I intend to let him have it next time," replied Vallance. "There is something in his pursuit of me I cannot understand, but the next time will be his last."

"Quite right," said Mr Blanchard, "don't stand any more fooling. Remember he threat-

ened you when he was sentenced at Ogden. That fact, and his following you now, will exonerate you from all blame for killing him."

"I don't want you to kill him if it can be helped," remarked Cora, "but I believe I shall feel more at ease when I hear that he is dead."

"You'll hear it if he comes after me again."

"How calmly you Americans talk about killing each other," said Violet. "Murder seems so dreadful to me, though, I must say, I am almost wicked enough to wish this evil creature dead. He has such a wicked face."

"We don't kill people because they have wicked faces," answered the millionaire, laughing, "but we are very apt to do it when they show a desire to send us to join the majority."

"To tell the truth," said Arthur, "I am rather in hopes that he will resume his attack upon me as soon as he comes out, and give me a chance of getting rid of him for ever. I am convinced that he means me harm. What his object is, I don't know, but I shall be glad to settle the affair, and know that I can go about without being continually on the alert."

"But suppose he should shoot first?" asked Violet.

"He'll never get near enough to have a good

shot," was the reply, "and he won't live to shoot twice."

"Arthur can shoot like a cow-boy," said Cora: "it is a consolation to know that."

For a few minutes longer they discussed the matter, and then Violet had to leave for the theatre.

CHAPTER XIV.

A WRECKED TRAIN.

Six weeks passed away and Mr Blanchard, with his little party, having been a few weeks in New York, left that metropolis for Cincinnati *en route* for New Orleans. Some important negotiations in connection with the extension to the Crescent city of the Chicago and South-Western Railroad were the cause of the millionaire's trip to the far South.

At Cincinnati, also, so ludicrously termed the "Queen City," they remained several days, leaving the cars and stopping at an hotel; for Mrs Crakes's dramatic company was now playing to crowded houses in this town, and on the termination of its engagement here it was booked to proceed direct to New Orleans. During their brief stay in this grimy and dirty city of the Teutonic American, Mr Blanchard and his daughter were as kind to Violet, and as fond of her society, as ever, and when the time for travelling southwards arrived, their

persuasions, coupled with those of Arthur, had induced the young actress to become Cora's guest on her father's private cars during the trip to New Orleans.

So, on Sunday night, at about half-past nine, this quartette started on its journey, all four of them standing out on the rear platform of the last car as the train rolled slowly over the bridge which spans the Ohio river.

Violet especially was feeling in unusually good spirits, and doubtless had some cause for doing so. In the first place, she was glad to have her old playmate and her once boy lover with her again; in the second, she was pleased and flattered by the kindness and attentions of Blanchard *père et fille;* and in the third, she had proved an immense success on the stage in this town, receiving an ovation from each of the audiences, and highly complimentary notices from the press.

Even for her, life was beginning to look fairly bright in its prospects, and any little disappointment which she might feel at Arthur's evident devotion to Cora, she had determined to master. She had quite made up her mind to that. All sentiment and romance she felt must now be dead to her, and have no future part in her existence

except when she was depicting them on the stage.

The time would come, her sister actresses sometimes told her, when she would make a brilliant match, but she would only smile in reply, and think of the tall, muscular boy who used to row up the river to River Lawn almost every afternoon on purpose to see her. But now, when she had found that same boy, after many long years of absence, although she still perceived in him a true and dear friend, she realised, with some regrets at first, that another queen had arisen for him, and that never again would she occupy the first place in his thoughts. And then she concluded to herself that her first and last romance was over.

Nevertheless, she was cheerful and bright at all times, and so perfectly natural and at home in Arthur's company, that he never doubted for a moment that the childish passion of their early days was as dead with her as it was with him.

The train dashed along through the dark night, looking like a meteor darting over the surface of the earth, panting, puffing, rocking, and quaking, whirling through curving tunnels, rushing over light bridges, and tearing through the noted grass lands of Kentucky, while a

happy little group of four in the rear car sat down to a supper table, laden with all the luxuries of the season.

At Lexington the train halted for a few minutes, and the party stepped out on the platform to look at the station. Then onward again it darted in its swift flight, carrying its load of human freight at the rate of nearly a mile a minute.

"I think I will go to bed now," said Violet, shortly after their departure from Lexington, "the champagne has made me quite sleepy."

"I am going, too, in a few minutes," replied Cora, "but I will come in and say good-night to you first."

"And have a couple of hours' gossip,—eh?" queried Mr Blanchard, smiling; "young ladies' good nights are like young ladies' good-byes—they entail a heap of talking, and occupy a lot of time."

"Not to-night they won't," returned Violet. "I am dead tired."

"And is that the effect our society has on you?" asked the millionaire.

"Oh, no; but I was up quite early. You are all so jolly and kind; it seems a shame to go to bed, but I can't hold out any longer."

"Then, don't try," said Arthur; "but let

us see you at breakfast looking as fresh as a young rose on a dewy summer's morning."

Then she shook hands with the two men, and Mr Blanchard escorted her across the vestibuled platform into the next car, returning immediately after to his daughter and secretary.

"I don't wonder, young man," he said to Arthur, "that you fell in love with that girl in your early days, for she has the sweetest disposition I ever came across. I am almost in love with her myself."

"Father is putting out a feeler to see if I will have Violet for a step-mother," said Cora, flippantly, "it is a matter which will need—"

She never finished the sentence, for at that instant the car gave a terrific jolt, and seemed to rear itself up in the air like a restive horse, while a cracking and grinding of timber sounded in front, and everything became suddenly dark. Crash, bang, bang, crash; then, for a second, a strange grating sound, then a giddy whirling like a ball rolling down a hill, then a noise like an explosion of dynamite accompanied by the smash of glass, and all was still, save for the deep hissing of escaping steam from a wrecked engine.

The train, which had been gliding so swiftly

and smoothly along the track a moment before had jumped the rails, the cars, partially telescoping, had trailed along the road-bed for a few yards, and then, lurching over the embankment, had precipitated itself a distance of some sixty feet into the ditch below, making a couple of complete somersaults in its downward progress.

For a few seconds an intense silence prevailed, broken only by the dense volumes of steam pouring out from the locomotive, which was lying with its wheels pointing up to the star-lit sky, just like a huge black beetle laid flat upon its back. Presently, though, sounds of life, in the shape of groans, mingled with the noise of the escaping steam. Then came screams of agony, cries of woful distress.

From the minute when he had been listening to Cora speaking, Arthur seemed to know nothing, to remember nothing, until he found himself lying curled up in a dark corner with something warm and soft on the top of him. He struggled to free himself, and finally succeeded in sitting up, his legs still being encumbered by the weight of a heavy body. Reaching out his hand in the dark it encountered first a shoulder, then a warm neck, then a mass of hair.

With the return of intelligence quickly came a spasm of pain. It was Cora's body that was lying limp and helpless across his lap.

With considerable difficulty, on account of his wedged-in position, he succeeded in reaching to his trousers' pockets and extracting his fusee box. Striking a match, he held it up before him, and saw Cora lying face downwards right across his legs, and Mr Blanchard, a couple of yards away, struggling to rise, and vainly endeavouring to find some firm place to set his feet. Above his head were the glassless windows of the car, so that he knew instantly she was lying on her side, and immediately beneath him lay Miss Blanchard's piano, also on its face, supporting both himself and its owner.

Close beside him lay a trainman's lantern, and, reaching this, he lit it. Then, by the aid of its light, he extricated himself, and standing on the broken framework of the car, lifted up Cora, and placed her in a sitting position on the recumbent piano. Almost immediately she raised her head and looked round.

"Are you hurt?" he asked, holding the lantern close to her face.

"I don't know," she said, drawing her dress

down below her knees. "I am aching all over. What has happened?"

"See if you can stand," he said, taking hold of her beneath the arms and raising her very gently.

"I believe I'm all right," she said, standing quite upright. "Where's father?"

By this time the millionaire had risen, and was balancing himself astride a broken window. He, however, presented a woful sight, for his face and head were cut, and the blood was streaming down his nose and cheeks.

"Are you safe, my girl?" he cried, on seeing his daughter's figure standing upright amidst the wreckage.

"Yes, quite, father. You're hurt."

"Only a few scratches," he answered, wiping his face with his handkerchief. "Let's get out. The darned train may take fire."

It is not, however, such an easy thing to get out of a wrecked and telescoped railway carriage, for while one end of the car was locked into the end of the one in front, the door at the rear was jammed so as to be immovable.

Arthur climbed up to a square hole which had once been a large plate glass window, crawled through it, and then lying flat on his

stomach on the outside, extended his arms downwards through the opening, and told Mr Blanchard to lift his daughter, and hand her up to him.

The next minute he had raised Cora through the opening. and placed her safe and sound by his side.

"Now, go and look after Miss Carlisle," shouted the millionaire from the interior of the wrecked car. "I will get out somehow."

But Cora had to be lowered to *terra firma* before any other rescues were commenced, and by the time that Arthur had let himself down to the ground and induced Miss Blanchard to drop into his arms, the railway president's burly form had struggled through the wide aperture, and perched itself on the uppermost side of the car, which, though now almost a total wreck, had up to a few minutes ago been one of the most ingenious and luxurious contrivances of modern travel.

Before he had time to essay a descent from this position to the earth below, the train conductor and a brakeman, lanterns in hand, and each covered with cuts and contusions, came hurrying up.

"Glad to see you safe, sir," called the con-

ductor; "can you get down all right? This is a terrible business."

"Never mind me," he shouted in reply, "go and help the young lady in my front car."

"Come with me," said Arthur to the two men; "her room was in front."

They ran to Mr Blanchard's second car, the fore part of which was completely telescoped into the ordinary carriage forward of it, and for a moment all three regarded with deepest horror the *débris* of this particular portion of the train.

The first ten feet of the carriage was shivered into splinters, and so intermixed with the last ten feet of the one before it that there was no telling where either commenced or ended.

They selected a portion of the car where less damage was done, and clambering up to the side, one by one dropped through a window into the dark interior. The first object that met their gaze as they held up their lanterns and stared around, was Mr Blanchard's man-servant making desperate endeavours to wriggle out from beneath a mass of wreckage. Having released this individual, who turned out to be but little hurt, they made their way

forward to look for Violet, and had gone but a few steps when they heard heart-rending groans, intermingled with an occasional wail for assistance.

As yet, though, no one was visible; but Arthur jumped forward, forcing his way over broken furniture, smashed woodwork, and piles of glass, calling out as he sprang,—

"We are coming, Vie, we are coming."

But it was yet several minutes before he or any of his companions succeeded in reaching Miss Carlisle, though her terrible groans and cries sounded right at their sides.

The axe and sledge-hammer had to be brought into requisition before they could get into the compartment whence the sounds proceeded, and the partition dividing the rooms completely demolished.

Then they found her in a fearful condition.

Lying huddled up in a corner, with the body of Cora's maid completely curled round the upper part of her own body, a portion of her head was the only part of her visible, so completely was she mingled with the broken timbers and spars.

The first thing to do was to remove the maid, and this they did with great difficulty, amid a low moaning from Violet, but a painful

stillness from the girl herself. The cause of this stillness was soon apparent. It was the stillness of death. Cora's faithful and long-tried attendant had been killed instantly while assisting her mistress's friend to disrobe, and her body in the whirling of the car becoming entwined around Miss Carlisle, had served, to a certain extent, as a shield and protecting cushion, for not a scar or a bruise was visible on this young lady's face, neck, or shoulders.

Arthur had almost congratulated himself on his friend's immunity from serious hurt, when, letting his eyes follow the outline of her figure, he saw that at some distance above the knee, both her legs became jammed in the wreckage and splinters caused by the telescoping of the carriage in front. Calling the others to his assistance, he instantly commenced to attempt to extricate her, while Mr Blanchard, who now arrived on the scene, sat down upon the mass of *débris*, and rested Violet's head in his lap.

Several minutes elapsed before much progress was made, the train conductor having to do some heavy work with the axe before the poor girl could be finally freed, and, when free, she was as helpless as ever, for her legs were badly crushed.

Then a mattress and a door were brought, and with great difficulty she was lifted out of the car and lowered to the ground, the train men, with axe and sledge-hammer, cutting a hole large enough to admit of the door upon which she lay being passed through it.

Laid upon the grass, patient, but in great agony, she sipped the brandy from the flask which Arthur put to her lips, and immediately after asked for Cora.

Before Arthur or Mr Blanchard had time to answer, the millionaire's daughter was sitting on the damp ground by the side of her friend.

"Light a fire, Arthur," said Miss Blanchard; "it is dreadfully chilly here, to say nothing of the dark.

Instantly the railroad president and his secretary returned to the wreck and collected fragments of wood, which they piled into a heap and ignited. Just as the fire was commencing to blaze, one of the porters who had only now succeeded in getting out of the last car, came up and told Mr Blanchard that the cook was killed.

"The range done gone and fell on his berth," he said, "and's lying on top ob him now."

"Poor man," replied Mr Blanchard, "we must get him out; he may not be dead."

"He's dead, sure enough, sar. Uncle Josh had a good thick skull, but it wasn't de kind ob skull to stand up against de kitchen stove. Dar's a hole or two in my own, I'm thinking."

"Well, you stay here and attend to these ladies, while Mr Vallance and I go and help the conductor."

"Very good, sar."

But before they had proceeded a single step, a brakeman ran up to Mr Blanchard and said excitedly,—

"Conductor wants you, sir. We've been done by train-wreckers."

"Train-wreckers!" exclaimed Mr Blanchard.

"Yes, sir. There's a big spike driven down between the joints of the rails on the high side of the curve, and two freight links riveted down on the rail with it. It's a clean job. No engine could go over it and keep the rail."

"I'll come at once," he replied, meditatively.

"Say, Mr Blanchard?"

It was the negro porter who spoke.

"What is it, Sam?"

Sam approached close to his master, as if afraid of being overheard, and said, in a low guttural voice,—

"What's dat strange nigger doing ober dar, sir? How did he get hyar?"

"What strange nigger?"

"Dat nigger dat I met a minute ago—a big black nigger. He warn't on de train, sar."

"I haven't noticed him."

"Well, sar, dat nigger asked me, yesterday morning in Cincinnati, if I was sure dat we was gwine to leave last night, and I said yes. Dat nigger used to be a sleeping car porter, and I used to know him. I knowed 'im too well. He was a darned bad nigger."

"Well?"

"Dat nigger was in Cincinnati, yesterday, sar; how did he happen to be hyar at dis time."

I see what you mean," said Arthur, "we'll interrogate him."

And straightway, taking Sam and the brakeman with him, he went in search of the negro in question, Mr Blanchard deciding to remain with his daughter and Violet, as he was afraid to leave them unattended.

Violet was now lying perfectly still and quiet, only uttering a low moan occasionally and being, apparently, less than semi-conscious, letting one of her hands rest in those of Cora's, who sat beside her, pensive and sad, gazing at the bright flames of the fire.

CHAPTER XV.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

As Arthur and his two attendants walked away they espied the headlight of an engine approaching them. It was coming from the direction of Lexington, and was distant then about a mile.

"Any one gone back to flag her down?" asked Vallance, of the brakeman.

"Yes," was the reply, "we knew she was due here soon; she was side-tracked at Lexington for us to pass. The conductor asked Mr Blanchard's servant to take a lantern and go back. He's gone."

"Is it a passenger train?"

"Yes; a second section of the night express from Cincinnati; she left about half-an-hour ahead of us."

"She'll be very useful to us."

"Yes; she'll have to run back to the next station and send a wire for reliefs. We can put the ladies into one of her sleepers."

"So we can. Maybe there will be a doctor on board."

"Quite likely; though, excepting the young lady, there ain't much work for a doctor. It's nearly all for the undertaker, worse luck."

"Who is killed besides the cook and Miss Blanchard's maid?"

"The engineer and fireman. I have just been helping to get 'em from under the engine."

"Four killed out of so small a number!"

"There'll be more dead than that if we can ketch the wreckers. We've only one jedge in Kentucky who deals with train wreckers, and that's Jedge Lynch."

They walked all round the wrecked carriages and engine, peering carefully about, but not a sign could they see of the negro they sought, or of any other negro.

Meanwhile, the approaching train, having been stopped by Mr Blanchard's servant had taken him on board, and crept slowly up to the scene of disaster, until its engine was within a few feet of the spot where the track was torn up, and the rails spread, by the violence with which the special had floundered about on the road-bed before finally going down the embankment. Then, as soon as it had halted, the trainmen, followed by some of the male

passengers, hurried out to the relief of their comrades in distress, and it was during a brief consultation held by the officials of the two trains, that Sam, touching Arthur on the arm, whispered,—

"Dar's dat nigger, sar, wid dem passengers, a little distance from the fire. He's jest done come fro' behind dem trees, and is gwine to pertend he belongs to dat express.

In a whisper, Vallance repeated this communication to the two conductors, who, looking in the direction indicated, were easily able, with the aid of the light shed by the flames from the pile of burning wood, to scrutinise the features of a big darkie standing on the outside of a little group of men which had descended from the train just arrived.

"That nigger didn't get here on my train," remarked the conductor of the express. "I'll swear to that."

"Very well," said the conductor of the smashed-up special, "we'll find out how he did get here. If you, sir," turning to Vallance, "will just go over there and get directly behind him, we'll walk up to him, and ask him to explain. If he shows fight or tries to run, you grip his right arm and we'll fix him in a minute."

Arthur sauntered carelessly over to where the darkie was standing, and took up a position immediately behind him. Then the two railroad men stepped boldly up, and accosting the negro, the conductor of the special asked,—

"What are you doing here?"

An uneasy expression flitted over the black's face as he answered hesitatingly,—

"I'se jest come out fro dat train, sar."

"You lie; you black scoundrel!" exclaimed the other conductor. "You never came down on my train. Where's your ticket?"

"Don't yo' go to call me liar, sar, 'cause I don't let no white man call me liar. I isn't no slave."

"Show me your ticket."

The last words were spoken in peremptory tones, and they were emphasised by the speaker's hand suddenly emerging from his coat pocket, holding a large nickel plated revolver, which shone like polished silver in the gleam of the blazing fire.

The negro produced a ticket, casting at the same moment an anxious glance at the weapon.

"Cincinnati to Chattanooga," read the conductor; "that's right enough." Then

pointing to three little holes in the paper, each figuring a tiny star, he asked, "How did these get here?"

The negro now was obviously embarrassed. He hesitated, stammered, and tried to step back, but only trod on Arthur's toes, and found himself pushed forward again. He knew enough of railroad life to know that every train conductor has a distinctive punch.

"Dem's de holes of yore punch," he said desperately.

"You lie; you black rascal! My punch makes the letter D. My name is Dickson. Those holes were made by the punch of Conductor Price, who took out the afternoon train six hours ahead of me. Hold up your hands."

Whether the coloured descendant of Ham would have held up his hands voluntarily or not never needed to be decided, for seeing his hesitation, Arthur Vallance gripped both his wrists from behind, and held them tightly, until the others, taking a rope from a brakeman, pinioned him.

Having tied his hands firmly behind his back, they led him to an oak a few feet distant, and securely fastened him to it by passing a bell-cord round and round his body and the trunk of the tree.

Before proceeding any further in this inquiry, it was necessary to arrange about getting the news of the wreck to the nearest telegraph station, in order that reliefs and a construction train might be sent down at once. This, however, was considerably simplified by the arrival of the express, and the conductor of that train, jumping on board, ordered his engineer to back to the next station, which was only about two miles away. In half-an-hour he had returned, and drawn up his train at the same spot as before, having sent news of the disaster to the proper officials, and received intimation that assistance of every kind would soon be on its way, and bringing back with him a medical man.

For the present, then, there was nothing more to be done. Several other fires had been lit, and the place looked more like a bivouac than the scene of a terrible disaster.

Violet lay white and pale upon her improvised couch, while Cora sat by her side. The wounded girl seemed still only about half conscious, and her eyelids were closed over her eyes, while the light breeze that prevailed fanned her cheeks, and blew her black hair fitfully about her forehead.

In the meanwhile some startling events had taken place in regard to the arrested negro.

This coloured gentleman, having been told that it was almost conclusively proved that he was concerned in the wrecking of the train, and that if he did not confess, a fire would be built around him, took fright, and made a craven appeal for mercy.

"'Deed, boss, it warn't me!" he cried to Bill Collins, the conductor of the smashed-up special. "Indeed, it warn't!"

"You know all about it," was the reply. "Niggers don't wreck trains in Kentucky and live. Let's hear what you know."

"If I tells all dat I know, will yo' promise to let me go?" he asked, evidently coming to the conclusion that it was time to look after himself.

"If you don't tell all that you know, we'll light a fire round this tree," answered Collins, slowly and emphatically. "We make no promises; you tell or burn."

"Yes; you tell or burn!" echoed a chorus of half-a-dozen Southerners, who had been passengers on the express.

"Den I tells," he answered.

"Be quick about it then."

Arthur and Mr Blanchard were now stand-

ing by, the latter having left several ladies with Cora and Violet. The spot where Miss Carlisle lay was some little distance from the tree to which the negro was fastened, and obscured from it by a small clump of bushes and another huge fire which had been lit, so that neither Cora nor her injured friend could see anything of the events transpiring.

"It was dis way, boss," commenced the negro, "I'se bin nigh on to starving for a month or mo'."

"Never mind your starving," interrupted a brakeman; "come to the wrecking of our train."

"'Deed it warn't no wish o' mine to smash yo' up."

"Never mind that; come to the point. Who did it?"

"It was a white man, boss, who done give me a hundred dollars to help him."

"Then you did it, you black ruffian?"

"No, boss; I only helped. I only done held the spike while he druv it in, and showed him whar to put it. 'Deed, boss, dat's all I done."

"Where is this man?"

"Ober de bank, boss, I think, boss. He ain't gwine for to go far away. He said dar

was thousands of dollars on de train, and we could get it when ebery one was killed."

"You see we are not all killed."

"No, boss; but dat's one ob de fust miracles I ever seed. Dat train went ober de embankment wid smash enuff to make a hole froo de earth, and yet yo' all comes out alive."

"Go on about this man. What does he look like?"

"Dar he is to speak fo' hisself, boss. Dat man ober dar wid a big red beard. Yo' jess pull dat beard and it will come off, and den yo' have de man. If he sees me tied to dis tree, he will skip, boss."

The man pointed out by the darkie was about fifty yards away, standing with two or three other men, viewing the remains of Mr Blanchard's private cars. His profile was presented to the group around the negro, and his attention not yet having been directed to the prisoner, Arthur and the conductor, with several others, were enabled to approach him unawares, and suddenly throwing themselves upon him, to make him captive before he could offer the slightest resistance.

They led him to the tree, where his accuser was fastened, and confronted him with that ebony scoundrel, who cried out,—

"Dat's de man, boss. Dat's de man which led a pore starving cullud man into temptation. Dat's de man which gave me a hundred dollars to help 'im smash up yo' train. Dat's Satan, boss; dat's Satan, shure enuff. Yo'd see him better, boss, if yo' took off dat yaller hair."

In an instant the new prisoner's hat, wig, and false beard had been stripped from off him, and cast on the ground, and Arthur, who had assisted in the undisguisement, gave vent to an exclamation of surprise. The man was an old acquaintance. He was the same fellow who had attacked him on the Union Pacific train, and who, years later, had followed him about Chicago, until he knocked the rascal out through the door of a tobacconist's shop, and obtained for him a month's imprisonment.

"We meet again," said Vallance, paying no attention to the astonishment with which the rest of the company had noticed the recognition passing between him and their prisoner.

"We do," answered the man sullenly.

"And now for the last time," said Arthur.

"That remains to be seen," was the reply, followed by a look of defiance and malicious hatred.

"You are accused of having wrecked this

special train, on which I was one of the passengers."

"Who accuses?"

"Your confederate; this nigger. He has confessed. Do you know how Southerners deal with train-wreckers?"

"I am not a train-wrecker."

"Dat's what yo' is, boss," shouted the negro. "Yo' done tempted me to help yo' 'cause yo' knowed I was starving."

"Four people are lying here dead," said Conductor Rollins, "dead, through your work. The engineer was a married man with four children. You have robbed his wife and family of their breadwinner. We can't bring him back to them, but we can go to them and say, 'the murderer of your husband and father is hanging from a tree at the scene of the wreck which he made.'"

"I had nothing to do with it," the man said, his courage failing at the calm manner in which the conductor spoke of hanging him to a tree. "I swear that I was on the train which arrived a few minutes ago."

"That's easily settled," said Vallance, feeling in the man's waistcoat pockets, and finally extracting a railway ticket.

This ticket, like that of the captive negro

had three little holes punched through it, each hole being in the shape of a star.

"That settles you, my friend," remarked Conductor Rollins, after looking at the bit of paper. "You were also in Price's train which passed here quite five hours ago. You booked to Chattanooga to avoid suspicion, and got off, I suppose, at the station two miles back, or at Lexington?"

"Dat's quite right, boss; we got off at Lexington, and den we walked hyar," cried the negro, who had come to the conclusion that his only chance of salvation was to convict his confederate.

At this moment Conductor Dickson, having returned with the express, joined the group, and was at once asked if the man had been a passenger on his train. After eyeing him steadfastly for a moment, he replied,—

"No. I say so positively, without asking for his ticket."

Then Arthur briefly related to the bystanders his two previous experiences with the white prisoner.

After this Rollins, seeing that all the railway men from both trains were now present, except the unfortunate engineer and fireman who had met their deaths, said,—

"Boys, it is dead certain that this nigger and this man are the two who wrecked us and murdered our comrades. Train-wrecking must be stopped, or the lives of us railroad men are worth nothing. Last week three niggers were lynched in Mississippi for wrecking a local train. We must follow the example of our brothers in Mississippi. I vote we hang both these men right here."

"So do I! so do I!" resounded from a dozen voices, and the fate of the two train-wreckers was practically settled.

The negro, on hearing the decision, howled, raved, pleaded, and even preached, orating at one moment on the sin of murder, and at the next begging his judges to bear in mind that it was he who had made a confession, and thus brought to justice the second criminal.

But American railroad men never have any mercy for those who slaughter their brothers and comrades on the rail by wilful wrecking, and they only sneered at the darkie's prayers and lectures.

The other man, who now stated that his name was William Rogers, and that he was an Englishman, took the sentence rather more coolly, but brought down a storm of derision upon his head when he threatened the crowd

with international complications and the wrath of the British Government.

"We don't want to act with undue haste in this matter," said Rollins quietly, after a short talk with Arthur and the other conductor, "so we give you both twenty minutes. At the expiration of that time you die."

Then the men scattered about, leaving a strong guard with the prisoners, and Arthur and Mr Blanchard hurried to where Violet was lying. With her they found the doctor, who had returned on the express, and asking his opinion, they were assured that amputation would be necessary as soon as possible.

"I have injected morphine hypodermically," he added, "and she is now really free from pain. That is the best I can do until we can move her. Unfortunately I have not the necessary instruments."

Mr Blanchard's brows contracted, and his lips pursed closely together, when he heard this woful news, but he merely said, in a subdued voice,—

"I thought of trying to save that nigger, but now I will see that they both suffer the same fate. This is the worst thing I have ever known during my railroad experience."

CHAPTER XVI.

A STRANGE CONFESSION.

When Arthur and Mr Blanchard rejoined Cora and Violet they found the latter in precisely the same condition as before, with the exception that she opened her eyes at their approach and tried to smile.

"We shall be able to move you soon now," said the millionaire, kneeling down on the rugs by the girl's side; "or you might be put in the sleeping car at once if you like."

"I am quite comfortable here," she murmured in reply; "it is nicer out here than in the car. The breeze is so fresh and pleasant."

"Are you in pain."

"No," she answered, dreamily, "no pain now. It has gone."

Then, after a moment's pause, she asked,—

"What was going on just now. I thought I heard angry voices."

"You did," answered Arthur, at whom she had been looking when she put the question.

"It was the men. They have caught the fiends who wrecked us."

Cora, who was wrapped in blankets and sitting with her back against a tree, looked up, interested.

"Who did it?" she asked.

"That same man who has already attacked me twice, and a negro," replied Arthur. "The nigger has confessed."

"That man," exclaimed Cora, "that same man! Then he must indeed be determined to kill you."

"He will never get another chance; all danger from him is past."

"Why?" asked Violet. "Are they going to take him to prison?"

Neither Arthur nor Mr Blanchard answered the question, although it was repeated several times.

"What are they going to do?" she asked again, after a pause. "I want to know."

An answer to the question came in an unexpected form, for at that moment a young man, attired like a clergyman, came forward and, addressing himself to Cora, said,—

"Those men have begged me to entreat you ladies, who were passengers in the wrecked train, to intercede for their lives. If you two

will only plead with these relentless railroad men, it is probable that your influence will induce them to forego this summary vengeance and let the prisoners be tried according to law."

"The law here does not make train-wrecking, even when it causes death, murder in the first degree," said Mr Blanchard, coldly. "These men deserve death, but the law is powerless to kill them."

"Will you ladies aid me in averting this terrible deed?' pleaded the young parson.

"I will," said Violet, faintly. "Let all the trainmen come here. Cora, you will join me in begging for the lives of these miserable creatures. I never thought of this. It is what they call lynching."

"You really mustn't excite my friend," said Cora, turning to the clergyman. "She is terribly injured, and ought not to be spoken to about such a thing."

"Cora, you go and plead for them," urged Violet in a very low, weak voice.

But Cora made no sign of moving. She only looked up in Arthur's face, caught an expression of approval there, and remained silent.

"Will you come and plead for them?" asked the young clergyman. "I am sure you can save their lives."

But Miss Blanchard looked him unflinchingly in the face, and replied in freezing tones.

"Young man, you do not know what you ask. You have no right to put me in such a position; you have no right to pretend that I can save them."

"You can save them. You can influence, with your entreaties, sufficient of these hard-hearted men to avert this ungodly vengeance."

"I am not in favour of vengeance as a rule, but this sort of thing, this wholesale slaughter of honest men and pure women, this wanton creating of orphans and widows, is too much. Setting revenge aside, a terrible example is needed."

She spoke sternly and almost vindictively.

The reverend gentleman, however, had not yet finished. He turned to Mr Blanchard, saying,—

"You, sir, with your vast influence—I have been told who you are—could do something."

"I'm out of it," was the curt reply. "I stand by the railroad men every time! But, see, Miss Carlisle has fainted!"

It was quite true. Unnoticed by any one during the last few sentences of this conversation, Violet had become unconscious.

For a few moments the doctor knelt anxiously over her, perfect silence prevailing among the onlookers; but presently the young minister, noting the speedy lapsing of the twenty minutes' grace accorded to those he was seeking to save, again approached Cora, saying,—

"You and your father could save these men. Must they die?"

"I told you that you had no right to put me in such a position," she replied, her voice now betraying some irritation. "You have no grounds even for this assertion. Besides, look at my friend lying here, and at my dear old servant dead over there."

"I am sure I am right," he persisted. "A word from you or your father, especially from you, would save them. Will you be noble and say it?"

"I cannot say it," she answered in an almost inaudible whisper, letting her head sink forward on her bosom.

"Then, must they die?" he asked gravely.

"They must die," she answered, without raising her head.

Arthur Vallance, seeing how persistently the clergyman was urging Cora to try to save the prisoners, thought that it was now time to

interfere, so laying his hand on the parson's shoulder, he said,—

"See here, sir, you've done your best, and now leave these ladies alone. Your zeal for those two fiends has caused you to forget that one of these young ladies is terribly injured, and the other also much bruised and hurt; and you overlook entirely the sorrow, and suffering, and death your clients have caused. You had much better spend your time preparing them for their fate."

The minister bowed sadly, and walked away to the two doomed men. Presently he returned, and, taking Arthur by the arm, said,—

"That white man wishes to speak to you. He says it is about something very important."

Vallance at once accompanied him to the young oak to which Rogers was fastened.

"Arthur Vallance," said the miserable man, who in the last few minutes seemed to have aged and changed greatly, "is it true that they are really going to lynch me?"

"Quite true," was the cold reply; "you heard it all settled."

"It is terrible — terrible!" he muttered, wriggling in the thongs which bound him to the tree. "I never expected this. I daren't die."

A laugh was the only response to this abject statement, but that laugh did not come from Mr Blanchard's secretary; it came from the two brakemen who were standing guard over the condemned men.

"It is too late to talk of that now," said Arthur; "there is no hope for you. The only advice I can give you is to use the remaining few minutes in some manner better than begging for your life. You have taken four innocent lives; these Kentuckians demand yours in return. You have twice tried to kill me. My safety lies in your death."

"Arthur Vallance." The man spoke in trembling, misery-stricken tones, while the perspiration poured down his face and neck, notwithstanding the chilliness of the night. "Arthur Vallance."

"Well?"

"I am your uncle, Arthur."

"My uncle!"

"Yes, your uncle—your father's brother. You cannot stand by and see your own flesh and blood treated in this manner."

"I have no power to interfere, even if your story were true. But how can you prove what you say? It is only an infamous lie, invented to bring about my interference."

"It isn't; it is the truth."

"You said your name was Rogers."

"That was only an assumed name; my real name is Clement Vallance."

"How is it that I never heard of such a person—never even heard that my father had a brother?"

"Because your uncle, Allen Redwood, kept it from you for his own reasons. He scorned to recognise my existence, or even your father's. Your mother left you entirely to his care and control."

"I know that," replied Arthur, becoming interested, for he could see now that, whatever truth or invention there might be in the man's statement about being his uncle, it was evident that, by some means or other, the fellow had acquired a knowledge concerning his affairs and relatives. "Did you know my mother?" he asked, after a pause.

"Yes," was the prompt reply; "but I never saw her after your father was killed."

"My father killed? He wasn't killed."

"Allen Redwood hasn't told you much of the family history," sneered the man. "He was always a preaching, sermonising sort of chap, inebriated with self-approbation and self-righteousness, and, on account of your parent-

age, looked upon you as doomed almost before you were born."

"How do you know that?"

"I have never lost sight of him or you—when I could help it. I had my reasons."

"How was my father killed?"

"He was shot and killed by an American in Paris."

"What for?"

"Running away with his wife."

Arthur turned away in disgust. If this were true, he could almost understand Mr Redwood's gloomy views about his own future and about heredity.

The prisoner at this moment cast an uneasy glance up the line. He had seen the headlight of an approaching engine.

"That is the construction train," said Arthur. "Hurry up with your story."

"Will you try to save me now?"

"I make no promises. I don't suppose I can if I try."

"You can if you get those girls and that 'big gun' who owned the private cars to interfere."

"When did my father do this?"

"Soon after you were born."

"And deserted my mother?"

"It wasn't likely he took her with him," remarked the man.

Arthur looked at him savagely. The human brute could almost joke at that moment and upon such a subject. It was evident that he believed his story had saved his life.

"What did my mother do?"

"She lived alone with you till her death. She became very religious, and never saw any one but her brother and a parson or two."

At this moment several men advanced towards the two doomed prisoners, apparently for the purpose of carrying out the sentence; but Arthur went to meet them, and succeeded in persuading them to wait a little longer.

The man who claimed to be Clement Vallance, seeing how readily his captors yielded to Arthur's request, became very much more hopeful.

"After her death, Allen Redwood was your sole guardian," he continued.

"I know that. Don't waste time in this way."

"I can tell you something you don't know."

"Go on."

"Will you save me if I tell?"

"I can't promise. I will do my best. That will not avail much."

"Just after your father's death, you, as his heir, inherited an estate worth five thousand a year. If he had lived, it would have been his."

"I never heard of that; it can't be true."

"It is true; but it was provided that you were not to come into it till you were twenty-five, and Allen Redwood and your mother were the trustees."

"But why was I never told?"

"Because Redwood thought it better that you should not know; he believed the knowledge would tend to nullify the austere training he considered necessary for one coming of such bad stock. He is cracked on the subject of heredity."

"I am beginning to see daylight. Who would have got this estate in the event of my death?"

"I would."

"And you were evidently anxious to get it?"

"I had a try for it. It was a prize worth some risk."

"So it appears. You had two tries; but this last was a clumsy and fiendish one."

"I am very sorry for it now. I never thought, though, any one could live through

such a smash up as this was. And I was getting hard-up."

"But why did you resort to such outlandish methods?"

"I was bound to come into the property through an accident. When I came out of prison, Redwood warned me that, if anything happened to you, he should put the police after me at once. I thought this accident plan very ingenious."

"You have been in prison? Verily, I do come of good stock! What were you in prison for?"

"Writing another man's signature, and—"

"Well?"

"Marrying a second wife before my first died."

"I ought to be proud of you as a relative, oughtn't I? If I believed in heredity to the same degree as my uncle, I should almost feel like putting an end to myself."

"We've always been an unlucky family."

"Unlucky?"

"Yes. It's more bad luck than anything else. My father got caught in some shady transaction that brought disgrace upon us. It's being found out that ruins one."

"No doubt; but it's lucky for the rest of

the world that being found out is sooner or later the fate of most scoundrels. I am quite sympathetic with my uncle in his horror of my ancestry, though I strongly disapprove his doctrines. How did you find me out in this country?"

"I was near Redwood House when you went there some years ago on your return from here, and I heard all about you from the gossips and others. And once I overheard—on purpose—a conversation between you and Redwood."

"What about?"

"Violet Carlisle."

"Perhaps it was you who had me shadowed in town?"

"It was."

"Why?"

"I was interested in your movements, especially as I wanted to find Violet myself."

"You wanted to find Violet! What for?'

"She is my daughter."

"Violet your daughter?"

"Yes; it was on account of her mother I was sent to prison."

"For what?"

"It was she whom I married before my first wife was dead, and the first wife prosecuted me.

"I am getting prouder and prouder of my ancestry and relations. Anything more to tell?"

"It is nearly all told now."

"Then you never found Miss Carlisle?"

"No; Redwood managed to hide her somehow."

"My uncle was in it, then? I always thought he had something to do with the Carlisles, though, I am afraid, I did him great injustice."

"Yes, he was mixed up with them. After I had been put away, your mother took an interest in my second wife, and made her an allowance, and when she died, left a large sum of money to Mr Redwood for her and Violet's maintenance. Redwood didn't enjoy the job, but he undertook it, although he and Mrs Carlisle, as she called herself, didn't like each other at all. He always looked upon her as a sinner for being taken in so easily, and she thought he was too narrow-minded and strict."

"What do you know about Mrs Carlisle's death?" demanded Arthur, a sudden suspicion flitting through his mind.

"Only that she was drowned accidentally. I know that, because I saw her fall in."

"I thought as much. A gentleman of your

integrity, and with your conscience, would never have pushed her in."

"No; I swear I didn't. I had nothing to gain by her death. She had given me money once, when I came out of prison, and I had been trying to get some more from her."

"Well?"

"She wrote me to meet her on the lawn at night, and I did. She gave me a few fivers, but refused to let me see the child. I asked her to kiss me, but she drew back, and, in doing so, fell over the cliff."

"And why didn't you raise an alarm?"

"Yes, and be hung for it! My character would have made me swing if I had been found there, and she in the river."

"So, instead of trying to save her, you ran away?"

"As hard as I could cut."

"And did no one know that Mrs Carlisle was the lady who had been duped by you?"

"No one but Allen Redwood. She took the name of Carlisle — her own name was Violet Sumner—and no one else ever discovered her identity except me."

"How did you?"

"I knew whereabouts to look. I wanted to

see her and the child, and I knew she would lend me money rather than have the truth known to the people round her."

"And so I really come of such depraved stock as this? Is it possible that such a man as you can be brother to my father?"

"I wasn't always so bad. Your father was the elder of us. He got what money there was, and I had to shift for myself. It's very hard to put the brakes on once you commence to go down hill as rapidly as I went."

"Do you know where Violet Carlisle is now?"

"No; Allen Redwood sent her abroad I heard."

"Did you ever hear she had gone on the stage?"

"No; I never heard so. You see you got me five years in prison out west. That kept my ears closed."

"Well, Violet Carlisle is lying under that tree, crushed and maimed by your own hand. One of your victims is your own daughter; she was travelling with us to New Orleans. She was a member of the Crakes troupe."

"That is impossible!" cried the man; "you are trifling with me."

"It is the truth. Violet Carlisle lies be-

neath yonder tree, injured, perhaps, beyond recovery. You have done it."

The culprit hung his head, and made no response for a minute or two.

Then the hardened sinner looked up and pleaded,—

"Arthur, I didn't know she was even in this country, much less in that train."

"I don't see that that makes any difference," returned Arthur. "You couldn't be a worse scoundrel or more cowardly murderer than you are."

"I admit it, I admit it," he whined plaintively, taking his cue from the stern expression that had spread over his nephew's features. "But you will save me from these wretches, won't you? You said you would."

"If I saved you, you would only be sentenced to fifty or seventy-five years in the penitentiary."

"That is double as long as I can live, but I don't mind. I don't want to die yet. Arthur, I daren't die."

"No doubt it requires more than ordinary courage for a man like you to face death; but I don't believe I can influence these fellows. Now that the relief train has come, there'll be too many to deal with."

"Save me, Arthur, save me! Tell Violet I am her father, and get her to plead for me."

Vallance turned on him sharply, and replied fiercely,—

"Before I tell your miserable story to that girl, I will see you swaying to and fro from one of these boughs overhead."

And amidst the wailings of the terror-stricken man, he walked away.

CHAPTER XVII.

JUDGE LYNCH.

After leaving the train-wrecker, Arthur Vallance climbed the embankment on to the road-bed, and walked along it till he met the relief train, which had just come to a halt. A gang of trackmen was then jumping out, and hurrying with implements and tools of all kinds to the spot where the line was torn up, while from a long carriage at the rear emerged several railroad officials, and three or four doctors and surgeons.

Stopping the medical men, Vallance pointed out to them the fire, near which they would find Miss Carlisle, and urged them to go to her at once. Then he turned back with the officials, and walked with them to the scene of the disaster. Counting trackmen, brakemen, conductors, firemen, engineers, sleeping-car porters and conductors, there were now about sixty railroad employés on the spot, and these, instead of going out at once to work,

held a meeting on the track, just above the wrecked carriages. It was only a very brief consultation, lasting, at the outside, four minutes, and then it broke up in a general rush down the embankment and towards the prisoners. Arthur's suggestion that they should be handed over to the Sheriff had met with jeers and scathing ridicule.

With extraordinary alacrity, and, amid abject pleadings for mercy, and many futile struggles to escape, the two captives were released from their respective trees, and dragged along to the wrecked carriages.

Some forty feet above the level of the uppermost side of the rear carriage stretched the bough of a huge spreading elm, and over this a couple of ropes were speedily flung by the brakemen, made fast, and their ends drawn to the top of the cars. They had been secured at such an angle from the train that, when hanging perpendicular, they would clear the car by about eight feet. Then the two culprits, whose voices could now scarcely be heard, so feeble had they become from fright, were raised bodily to the side of the car, and made to stand upright. In another instant all was ready. Conductor Rollins, who stood facing the doomed men, asked if either of them had

anything to say, to which Clement Vallance, now almost unconscious from fear, and tottering and shaking to such an extent that he had to be supported on either side, shook his head. The negro, however, who had paid some little attention to the clergyman's ministrations, was not going to be got rid of without a final word.

"Brudders," he cried, in a voice half choked with sobs, "I'se gwine to hebben in spite o' yo' all, but dar ain't none o' yo' white murderers 'ill ever see me dar, 'cause dar won't be none of yo' can get dar. I'se done repented dis deed, and I'se done been forgibben. I was a pore, starving, cullud man, and I done dis deed to get bread, and dar's allus forgibbness for de pore man. But dar won't be no forgibbness for yo', yo' white trash! Yo' don't think yo' can kill pore cullud folk in dis manner and get forgibbness. If yo' do, yo' am wrong, and when yo' 'peals to me in de far future to bring yo' down some ice-water from hebben to cool de burning in yo' throats, den I guess I am gwine fur ter hab de laff at yo'. While I'se up in de hebbens listening to de musick of de beautiful cullud minstrels, yo'll be roasting in de summah dat lasts for ever, and frizzling in de furnace dat never goes out. De sun ob

Wirginny or Caroliny am like ice compared to dat furnace. Brudders, I'se done repented dis deed, and yo' ain't got no right fur ter punish me now. If yo' don't want fur ter lib fur ever in dat fiery furnace, yo' better let me come down fro' hyar."

Want of breath here compelled the negro to pause for a moment in this characteristic speech, which, after all, had little that was original in it, and seems to be a stereotyped form of address made by most condemned darkies on all such occasions as this; and before he had time to resume, a movement was visible among the group on the car, and white and black had been pushed off, and were swaying side by side in the air, immediately above the bodies of two of their victims.

The act of vengeance was over, and the trackmen at once commenced operations on the damaged portion of the line as if nothing unusual had transpired.

It was a strange and weird sight then, this little scene on the Q. and C. Railroad.

The night was still dark, but several big fires were burning brightly, casting a lurid glare on the broken and twisted train lying in the ditch; upon those four recumbent forms, covered with blankets, resting on the grass;

upon the little groups of solemn medical men surrounding a wounded girl, pale as death, and now under the influence of chloroform; and upon those two grim and ghastly figures, with a large white placard bearing the inscription, "*These men were train-wreckers,*" pinned on each of their breasts, dangling at the ends of two ropes suspended from a bough above, and swinging to and fro in the breeze.

And high up on the embankment were numerous objects moving hither and thither, and lanterns bobbing about like corks on a troubled sea; while further down the track, extending into the darkness, stretched the express, with the relief train in its rear, their lamp-lit windows all seeming to form into one long streak of light.

For some time Arthur Vallance and Mr Blanchard walked up and down, a little aloof from where Violet still lay surrounded by doctors, and the former repeated to his companion the tale told by the white train-wrecker.

"Well, we're well rid of them both," said the millionaire; "I would not have raised a finger to save them. As for Violet, that man's story rather puts an end to Cora's suspicions. Miss Carlisle is in a very critical condition.

It is doubtful if she can go through all that is before her."

"What is going to be done now?"

"They are getting ready to put her on the train, and take her to Lexington. Once we get her there, we can get everything we want."

"And Miss Cora, too, wants looking after. She is very white, and has had a terrible shock."

"Yes, poor girl, she's much the worse for this night, but she's got the 'grit' of old Hercules himself."

And at this moment the last-named subject of their conversation, having a blanket thrown over her shoulders, suddenly came up behind them, and, sliding an arm within her father's, whispered,—

"Come, father, we are going on to the train now. The worst is over. They are carrying Vie there."

Mr Blanchard beckoned to Conductor Rollins, who was standing near by watching some men bring out the contents of the wrecked cars, and, on this official's approach, he said,—

"Good-bye, my man. You will hear from me again. You have done your duty as only an honest man can do it, and I shall not forget you, neither will we forget the family of our

dead engineer. If there's any trouble about the lynching call on me."

"There'll be no trouble about that, sir. We've all sworn to do it every time we catch a train-wrecker, and there ain't a man in the State who won't back us up. We shall be taking up a subscription for the widow of the engineer, and we'll let you hear of it, sir."

"Do so. Both my daughter and I will give liberally."

"And so will I," declared Arthur.

Then they all shook hands with the conductor, and wended their way up the track to where the relief train was standing.

An hour later Mr Blanchard had secured the best suite of apartments in the principal hotel in Lexington, and Violet had been gently laid upon a bed in a large, airy, comfortable room, and placed under the care of the ablest surgeons and most competent nurses the town could afford.

But several days elapsed, and still she hovered between life and death, and neither her doctors nor her nurses felt very sanguine about the ultimate result. Most of the time she was in an unconscious state, but occasionally her senses rallied, and then, when the realisation of what had happened came fully

upon her, she gave up all desire to live. But in these moments, although freely admitting her preference for death, she was gentle and patient, and thoughtful for all about her.

One of the most celebrated surgeons in America was telegraphed for, and came down from New York and stayed three days, but at the end of that time he shook his head, and said the case was "very serious; very serious, indeed."

"It is only medical skill and clever nursing that is keeping her alive," he added; "and they will be defeated in the end, unless some change for the better takes place soon."

But no change for the better took place, and so accustomed now was everyone to hearing Violet's weak voice plead that she wanted to die, that when one morning she stated she wished to make a will, no one was surprised.

"I want you to write it yourself, Cora," she said to her friend. "I will dictate it, and then sign it."

"Very well, dear," Miss Blanchard replied. "I suppose it will be legal."

"Oh, yes, if it is witnessed by two witnesses—that is all that is necessary in England."

Then the nurse brought pens, ink and

paper, and Miss Blanchard awaited her friend's dictation.

"Write," said the dying girl. "I, Violet Carlisle, late of River Lawn, Gloucestershire, leave to my dear friend, Arthur Vallance, everything I possess, or may ever become entitled to."

"Is that all?" asked Cora, seeing that Miss Carlisle dictated no more.

"Yes," said Violet, "that is all. I want him to give a thousand dollars of my little property to the widow of the engineer who was killed on our train, but I will tell him that."

Then this brief little testament was signed by Violet, and witnessed by Miss Blanchard and a nurse.

Soon after this Violet sent for Arthur, and Cora put the will into his hands.

"Well, Vie," said Vallance, trying to be cheerful; "how are we getting on?"

"The end is coming soon," she replied. "I feel as if I were fading away."

Then she asked the nurse to withdraw into the adjoining room. The woman having complied, she continued,—

"I want to speak to you and Cora, Arthur. I want to beg of you that there is to be no

more vengeance. If you ever discover the truth about my mother and myself, keep it a secret, whatever it may be. Let it be as dead as poor mother is already, and as I shall shortly be. Myself, I shall never know for certain who I really was, but it doesn't matter now. I die in peace with the whole world, and I forbid you to use anything you may ever learn about mother and me as a weapon against anyone."

"You are tiring yourself, dear." interrupted Cora, noting how feeble the girl's voice was growing; "you mustn't talk any more. Are you in much pain?"

"Yes; a good deal, but it will soon be over now. I want to say a few more words. I want you to promise that, now I am called away from this life, things shall be as though I had never lived. No further effort is to be made to trace my mother's history, and whatever is revealed by efforts already made is never to go beyond you two. Do you promise that?"

"We do," they both answered simultaneously.

"If I could have recovered without the loss of my legs I would have been glad to do so," she continued sadly; "but I could never care to live like this, and I have known all the time that I couldn't struggle through it. I

am not afraid to die, and I hope I shall soon meet mother again. I know people at River Lawn thought we were very irreligious and wicked, but mother was a good woman, though she did not care to parade it, and always refused to have her character gauged by the number of her attendances at church. I think that sometime in her life she must have been harshly dealt with by people who made an ostentation of religion, because she always denounced them as more narrow, more unforgiving, and more uncharitable than all others. Myself, I never knew any. We were so isolated from everyone at River Lawn, and in the last few years, my life has not taken me among that class."

Here she paused again. Vitality seemed to be ebbing fast now.

"And another thing, Cora dear," she continued, after a few minutes' interval; "I want you and Arthur to try and be happy together, and to love each other truly the rest of your lives. Will you promise that?"

"I promise to take the same interest in him that I have always taken," replied Miss Blanchard, visibly embarrassed.

"That is right," murmured Violet, moving her head and pillowing it on Cora's arm.

"The rest will come of itself. I wish I could have prevented that lynching. Those swift and terrible revenges are not Christian, I am sure."

"It was better as it was, dear," said Cora. "I could not say a word to stop it, with the face of my dead maid before me, and you injured and maimed lying at my side, and the knowledge that as long as that man lived, Arthur would be in danger."

"No one could have stopped it after the relief train had arrived," said Arthur. "There were about sixty men there then who would have been determined to have their revenge at any price. Myself, I am bound to admit that, on such occasions, lynching is the most salutary method that can be adopted."

"I am afraid I must agree in that," remarked Miss Blanchard. "Train wrecking is one of those crimes that are insufficiently reached by the law, and that, nevertheless, need the heaviest penalty that can be exacted. Lynching is really the offspring of the inadequacy and maladministration of the law."

"Perhaps you are right," said Violet; "but it seems very terrible. I am feeling so weak now."

And then she spoke no more, but fell into a light and restless sleep.

For two days she lingered, growing weaker and weaker, lying for hours at a time in a perfectly unconscious state, without even rallying or giving any of her anxious watchers the slightest hope for her recovery. Sometimes she would regain consciousness for a time, and would speak to those around, and, on one of these occasions, she whispered into Arthur's ear, just loud enough for him to distinguish her words,—

"Everything in that box, if you get it, that has to do with my father, give up to him, whoever he may be, with my love."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AMOR VINCIT.

VIOLET had passed away. Medical and surgical skill and expert nursing had done all that they could to keep her, but their efforts had been in vain. From the moment of the operation by which she lost both limbs, she had drooped and faded like a lily cut off from its root; and then, to hasten the final collapse, a contusion on the spine developed into a serious injury, and speeded the flight of the spirit from the mutilated and wounded body, which, till only a few days before, had been a beautiful and perfect specimen of what feminine physique should be.

Mr Blanchard, Cora, and Arthur had been present with Violet during her last moments, and consciousness had so far returned that just before her final gasp she was able to recognise them, and to whisper to each a parting word.

Two days later her remains were laid away in a shady spot in some lovely grounds, that, but for the tell-tale monuments and hillocks with which they are dotted, might be taken for carefully cultivated pleasure gardens, and the same evening the railroad king, with his daughter and secretary, returned to Cincinnati *en route* for home. The visit to New Orleans had been postponed.

Within a week of their return a letter arrived from Messrs March, Smartt, Wells, and Keep, stating that there was no box in the Safe Deposit Company belonging to any person of the name of Violet Redwood, but that it was a remarkable coincidence that there had been a box there for several years, uncalled for and unpaid for, the property of a Mrs Violet Sumner. Could this, they asked, be the one. In all other respects, except the surname, it seemed to be identical with what they were seeking.

As, however, there was now no hurry in the matter, Mr Blanchard wrote to the solicitors to take no further steps at present, but to notify the Safe Deposit Company that the box in question would presently be applied for in the proper way, and all charges paid thereon.

Several weeks elapsed after Violet's death,

and nothing of moment occurred. Mr Blanchard had been busy concerning the purchase of a line which would give the Chicago and South Western Company a road of their own through the coal fields of Alabama and the sugar plantations of Louisiana right into the centre of the city of New Orleans. It was a great undertaking, and involved a vast amount of figuring, planning, discussing, and corresponding. A good deal of the work fell upon Arthur, and for the time he saw but little of Cora.

At last, however, the transaction was satisfactorily completed, the transfer of roadway, stations, telegraphs, rolling stock, and other paraphernalia were made, and John Blanchard found himself at the head of a direct road from Chicago to New Orleans—a road that traversed some of the richest tracts of land in the United States. The railway king had made a glorious deal for his company, and the value of the shares of the Chicago and South-Western increased fifty per cent. in a week.

After this, matters settled down into the usual routine, and Arthur was once more able to spend his evenings in the company of his employer's daughter.

"Cora," he said to her one night in the

drawing-room, his voice sounding low and serious.

She looked up at him. He had forgotten the prefix "Miss," and she appeared surprised. Although for years she had always called him "Arthur," he had never before addressed her as "Cora."

Her astonishment, the elevation of her eyebrows, and the inquiring expression with which she looked him straight in the face, embarrassed and confused him.

"Cora," he began again after a brief pause; and, noting gladly that this time her eyebrows did not nearly disappear into her hair, but that she turned away and looked towards the window, he continued: "Do you remember poor Vie saying that she wanted us two to try to be happy together?"

"Yes," replied the millionaire's daughter.

"What do you think she meant?" asked Arthur.

"I think," and here Cora turned her face towards him with a mischievous expression in her eyes, "that she meant you must always be a good secretary to father, and not make love to his daughter."

Arthur could not refrain from smiling. It was very difficult to corner this girl. Nothing

but a bold plunge into the subject would do it. Beating about the bush could avail nothing. He resolved to make the plunge.

"For over five years, Cora," he said quickly, as if he were afraid she would attempt to stop him, "I have simply worshipped you. In fact, in addition to being the goddess of my fortunes, you have been the sunshine of my life. All these years I have lived content with the mere fact of being allowed to be with you sometimes, and to love you always. Everything in the world has changed for me except you; when I first loved you I was practically a pauper and an outcast; it was you who rescued me from poverty, wretchedness and degradation. Now I am, if not rich, as riches are calculated here, at least very well off. I am worth at least a quarter of a million dollars—every penny of it having come to me through your and Mr Blanchard's kindness. Besides that, I have an estate and money in England. Under your care and guidance, even my mind and thoughts have undergone a marvellous change for the better; and knowledge and experience of the world have come to me through channels opened exclusively for them by you and your father."

"According to you, I must have re-created

you altogether," she interrupted, shaking her head at him.

"Well, I think you did," he answered; "but let me say what I want to say. You know that I have been devoted to you all these years—that you have been the sun which has shed upon my life all its brightness; and I am confident that you like me as well as, if not better than, any one else. The position to which you have raised me is such that I might ask any living woman to marry me, and I ask you now to crown all the glorious things you have done for me by becoming my wife. Will you marry me, Cora?"

Again she turned her head and looked out through the window into the garden. After a brief silence, she answered,—

"You forget, Arthur, that I have been almost a mother to you, and that I am nearly two years your senior. In fact, I am almost an old maid. The younger girls here call me one."

"I have often heard you express your intention of being one," he said; "but you are wavering now. Say that it may be at last—that you will be mine. You must know that I am no fortune-hunter; you have seen for yourself how long and truly I have loved you."

"The disparity in our ages is great—very great," she murmured teasingly. "You know the conventional idea that a girl should be from two to eight years younger than the man she marries?"

"Hang the conventional idea," he retorted, with a laugh. "I had enough of conventionality before I ever met you."

She made no answer, and then a new and painful idea entering his head, he asked,—

"Are you afraid, Cora, that heredity will eventually develop in me the vices of the Vallances? Are you afraid to risk your future with one in whose veins flows the blood of those who have been tainted with crime. If that be so, then mine is a terrible heritage."

"Don't talk nonsense," she answered abruptly. "I have nothing to do with such morbid notions. Your mother, too, was a perfect woman—even your uncle admits that—and why should it not be, admitting that there is something in this doctrine of heredity, that the good you inherit from her is more than sufficient to counterbalance the evil you inherit from your father. I have no patience with such a teaching as impossible escape from hereditary vice. It is all nonsense."

"I believe with you," he exclaimed, glowing

with delight at the warmth with which she repudiated the idea; "but there are apparently people who put faith in these teachings, and I thought it possible you might not care to marry a man whose father and uncle had both paid the penalty of most dastardly crimes, and whose grandfather, also, had been notoriously vicious."

"I wouldn't care a cent; I have too much faith in my own perception to be influenced by such things. Besides, looking at it in the light of severest retribution following up families, is it not probable that such terrible expiation as these men suffered for their crimes would be sufficient atonement? Anything more revolting than a belief in the infallibility of hereditary vice, of the persistent and never-failing transmission from parent to child of every evil characteristic, cannot possibly be imagined. The idea is ridiculous, and if it were promulgated would do no end of harm."

"I am glad to hear you talk like that. Myself, I regard such a doctrine as highly iniquitous. See how patient and good Vie was, and yet her father was an awful scoundrel—far worse than mine. Nevertheless, this view and the desire to kill the evil inherent in me, were the basis of my uncle's whole treatment

of me. His intentions were good, and his faith *bona fide*, but he was carried away by exaggerated views on this subject, and narrow ones on most others."

"Quite true. You can see that in every line of the letters which he has written giving you all the details of your family history, and his guardianship over you, and the trust imposed on him by his sister in regard to Violet. When he found out that you and poor Vie were friends, he at once concluded that two evil spirits — each evil by inheritance — had come together for greater evil. I really believe that he thought that in banishing you to the Far West, he was taking the wisest step possible. And after all it has not turned out so badly."

"If you will only marry me, Cora dear, it will have turned out superbly."

"Well," she said, looking at him half-tenderly, half mischievously; "there is one thing about it—if I marry you, I shall be free from being persistently worried by every single man I meet to marry him. I have begun to come to the conclusion that there will be no peace for me in this world until I am married and done for."

He caught her hand and kissed it, just as

he had often done during the past five years. He could see now that the victory was his, but he held her in such high esteem and reverence, that it did not occur to him that probably he might treat her lips in the same manner as he had been wont to treat her hands.

"And I may be the happy man with whom you will seek refuge?" he asked; adding, "Say 'yes,' Cora, darling, and crown all your noble deeds by making me happy for life."

"I think I will do it," she answered, quite quietly, and with perfect composure. "I suppose if I don't we shall have to part sooner or later."

"Yes, if you don't we must," he said cunningly, for he knew nothing could ever drag him away; "I must resign and depart, for my love for you has mastered me."

"I should be sorry to lose you," she answered; "and as for father, he wouldn't like it at all. I am real fond of you, Arthur, and like you far better than any other man, and, perhaps, we might get along happily enough together. If you don't behave yourself I can always afford a divorce. There is no difficulty in getting one here."

She spoke lightly and flippantly, looking as

mischievous as ever, but when he reached out his arms, and lifting her bodily from the chair on which she was sitting, folded her in a passionate embrace, kissing her lips over and over again, a soft light stole into her eyes, and one arm wound itself voluntarily round his neck, while a hot scarlet cheek nestled against his shoulder. He knew that in spite of her bantering manner she loved him, though, perhaps her love did not contain as much commonplace romance and sentiment as is to be found in the bosoms of many other love-stricken maidens, being probably for this very reason of a deeper and more enduring nature.

She did not abandon herself to his embraces for any great length of time, but in a few minutes had wriggled out of his arms and was calmly standing before the mirror smoothing her hair.

"Dear me," she said, turning round towards him as soon as the ruffled tresses had been restored to order, "how very rough you men are."

Then a new idea seemed to enter her head, for a smile flitted over her features, and in a softer voice, she said, "Arthur."

"Yes, dear," he answered, walking nearer and standing just in front of her.

"Do you remember that day, years ago, when you and I stood here together for the first time?"

"Do you mean when I first came to ask your assistance when I came as a pauper pleading for help, and looking half like a bad specimen of cowboy and half like a British tramp?"

"Yes, then, when you came boldly to me in all your shabby clothes and asked me to fulfil my promise to help you when you were in trouble?"

"That is a scene that I shall never forget. It was the reception of a pauper by a queen."

"Did it occur to your mind then that some day the pauper would nearly squeeze all the breath out of the queen's body, and almost smother her with kisses?"

"No, it certainly did not; neither did it occur to me that some day the pauper and the queen would be man and wife. That was the last dark day of my life, but I did feel a gawk standing in my rags in this lovely room beside you in all your beauty and splendour."

"Do you know that at that moment I half loved you, and my whole heart went out in sympathy to you. You were so picturesque, so green, and yet so manly, and when you told

me your story, I thought you almost a hero, and determined to make you my *protégé*."

"And now you will make me your husband?"

"Yes, now you shall be my husband. I have moulded you to suit myself, and I am more than pleased with the result of my work. You know, Shakespeare wrote—

'*They say best men are moulded out of faults.*'

And certainly you had your fair share of faults when I met you on board ship."

CHAPTER XIX.

BACK AT REDWOOD HOUSE.

ARTHUR was in an ecstatic frame of mind when about an hour after the little scene recorded in the last chapter, he reached the Chicago and South Western Railroad Dêpot, and ascended in the lift to Mr Blanchard's offices. Fortune, indeed, seemed to be smiling upon him now, though the tragic end of his former friend and playmate still occasionally caused him some sad and painful reflections, the remembrance of the disaster on the Q. and C. and the scene at the Lexington Hotel looming up now and then across his happiness like a dark cloud passing beneath a bright clear sky.

He sat down at his desk in Mr Blanchard's private room, and attended to his business as usual, but said nothing to the railroad king about what had transpired that morning. It had been arranged between himself and Cora, that they should dine at the house on Drexel

Boulevard, and that immediately after dinner the new order of things should be proclaimed to the young lady's father.

During the dinner, and before the servants left the room, it was evident that Mr Blanchard suspected something, for no sooner was he alone with his daughter and Arthur, than he rested his elbows on the table, and asked,—

"Cora, what's up to-night? Something unusual going on—eh?"

"Ask Arthur," was the reply.

The millionaire turned to his secretary.

"I have asked Miss Cora, Mr Blanchard, to be my wife," said Arthur anxiously; "and subject to your consent, she has promised that she will."

He said no more. He knew that his prospective father-in-law approved of brevity, and would not care to be troubled with protestations of his devotion, or of his worthlessness for the great honour.

"It is quite true," said Cora, looking at her father frankly, but failing to catch his eye.

Mr Blanchard made no remark for at least a minute. He took up his glass of port, sniffed it, held it up to the light, sipped it, and put it down again. He appeared to be carefully con-

sidering his reply. When he spoke he merely said,—

"Young man, you have done very well for yourself."

"So I think, sir," replied Arthur, quite unabashed. "No one appreciates that fact better than I do."

"And I don't think I have done so badly," interposed Cora.

"No, I don't think you have," replied the millionaire. "I have no objections to offer, but I am not going to release him from his work. In fact, at the meeting to-morrow, he is going to be elected a director of the railroad, and he will have more to do than ever."

"You can trust me to keep him at his work," replied Miss Blanchard; "and if you think that our engagement will demoralise him, I'll turn him into a married man as soon as you like."

"It can't be too soon for me," said Arthur.

"I don't believe an engaged secretary would be worth a dollar to me," answered Mr Blanchard. "I guess you had better get it over soon and settle down again. Of course, you will both live here."

"Of course," said Cora. "I am not going to leave you. If I did, you yourself would

be marrying, and that would be a pretty how-d'ye-do. 'No step-mother taken here' is my motto."

"How would this day month do?" asked Arthur, almost beside himself with delight.

"Very well," answered Cora. "In fact, as we were going to Europe in six weeks it will do splendidly. We can all then go together as we should have done if this hadn't happened."

"It suits me," said Mr Blanchard. "I don't suppose Arthur will be worth much in the office this month, but he'll have to make up for it afterwards."

"You will find no difference in me," Arthur assured him.

"And don't suppose that having attained what you both imagine to be the zenith of happiness, you have no further duties in life, except to live and coo," continued Cora's father, with an inward chuckle to himself; "you are just opening your career, and nearly all the enjoyment and work and toil of life are before you. You will have immense powers for good, and you," turning direct to Arthur, "let what has been done for you be a model for what you shall do in your turn to your fellow-creatures."

And so it was settled that the marriage should take place in a month, and Chicago society was duly stirred by the news. But there was no great flourish of trumpets at the wedding, for it was an unostentatious ceremony, and as soon as it was over, the bride, who was attired in a plain tailor-made travelling dress, slipped away with the bridegroom into a carriage in which the two were driven at once to the Lake Shore Railroad Dêpot, where a private car, chartered from the Pullman Company, was awaiting them. A quarter of an hour, later, they were *en route* to New York.

Six weeks later, Mr and Mrs Arthur Vallence arrived at that comfortable but old-fashioned hostelry in Gloucester, known as the Bell Hotel, and soon after leaving his wife in the apartments they had taken, Arthur was driving a dog-cart in the direction of Redwood House.

No one had been apprised of his coming, but his aunt, who happened to be on the lawn as he drove up to the house, recognised him instantly, and welcomed him warmly.

"Oh, Arthur," she cried, reaching up her hands and pulling down his head and kissing him on both cheeks; "so it is really true that

you have married one of those beautiful American heiresses! Oh, you are a lucky dog! I always knew you would do splendidly."

Vallance was a little amused at the last sentence. He could not help reflecting that if his aunt had always been so sure of his success, she had kept her thoughts on the subject very much to herself. He, nevertheless, was pleased at her enthusiasm, and replied joyfully,—

"Yes; I have married a beautiful woman—a woman whose mind is as beautiful as her face."

"And she has millions?" asked his aunt eagerly. "I saw it in the *Daily Telegraph*. The telegram about the marriage said she was the richest heiress in America."

"She may be; I don't know. I didn't ask her how much she had."

"Oh, you sly boy," she said playfully. "I wish my two sons were here to see you; but John is at Cambridge, and Fred is with his regiment. Your uncle will be so glad to see you. Come to his study."

Mrs Redwood led the way, and a moment later Vallance was in the presence of his relative.

"Well, Arthur," said Mr Redwood, extend-

ing his hand to his nephew; "I am glad to see you, and to know of your success in life."

"Thanks," was the reply. "I have had my vicissitudes, but success and happiness have come at last."

"That is the most gratifying, because, as you know, I had great fears about you at one time."

"Yes; I know you had, but, in my opinion, they were unfounded. Still, every man has his own opinions and views, and you, I suppose, did your best according to yours."

Mr Redwood turned to his wife.

"My dear," he said, "Arthur and I must have a few minutes' talk. We will join you presently."

Mrs Redwood gracefully accepted the hint, and left the room.

"That is an extraordinary story about Clement Vallance," said Arthur's uncle, as soon as the door closed behind the mistress of Redwood House; "the retribution overtaking that family has been swift and terrible, and poor Miss Carlisle, too."

"She was as good and innocent as any woman that ever lived," returned Arthur. "It would be folly to pretend that there was any evil in her."

"There is evil in us all," was the reply;

"but it is more pronounced when our progenitors have been overcome by it. Her mother was weak; her father bad; she is well off to have been called away before developing any of their characteristics."

"I don't like your sentiments, uncle,—they are very harsh and unnatural. Violet was perfect. Her mother was the victim of a fearful deception."

"Quite true she was, but she married that man, knowing but little about him, and even after his crime was discovered, she refused to appear against him until subpœnæd by the court, and even then she furnished the money for his defence."

"I think it was noble of her."

"And long afterwards—after he had twice been in prison—I believe she gave him money."

"There was no sin in that."

"It was not right. She was very self-willed too. I urged her once to send her child away to some far distant country, where her disgrace might never be known. She was quite furious with me for suggesting it."

"She naturally would be. Any mother would have been. How old was she when she married?"

"Of course the marriage was void; it was no marriage. She was only about seventeen. She was living with her aunt, who forbade her to have anything to do with Clement Vallance; but in spite of that, she eloped with, and married him."

"And repented it ever after, poor woman. And my mother was good to her."

"Your mother having had so much trouble of her own, sympathised with her, and provided for her, when her own aunt cast her off. At her death she left her an income, appointing me trustee. Mrs Carlisle's aunt, although she never saw her again, also left her some money."

"What became of the first wife?"

"She died several years ago, being the only one in the family who has died a natural death, except your own mother, whose end was hastened by grief."

"What a wretched family history!"

"It is, indeed. I did everything to prevent your mother marrying your father, but it was no use. She loved him, and believed in him. Within a year he tired of her—she was too good and religious for one like him—and then came his awful fate."

"And, on account of all this, you treated

me as you did—you exiled me, and gave me to understand that I was doomed to perdition?"

"Not so. I had but little hope that you would turn out any better than the other Vallances, but I tried by strict discipline and perpetually reminding you of the fate of sinners, to save you if possible. I know that my views of religion are not those of every one; but I believe I am right, and, according to my belief, I try to do my duty."

"And now, uncle, what do you think of me?"

"I think that Providence has interposed on your behalf, my boy, and that with the aid of a good and true wife you will be able to overcome any evil inherent in your nature. Maybe, too, my sister's noble character has partially descended to you. Perhaps, also, the stain in the family has been wiped out by the retribution dealt to it."

"I am glad to hear you say so. You seem to be a little more liberal than you were. You used to lay so much stress on eternal punishment."

"Eternal punishment is a fact beyond dispute; but for your own sake, for the eradication of the evil in you, I had to dwell specially

on the subject, and to picture it in its worst light."

"I cannot agree with you; but we will not discuss it, and we can be just as friendly holding different opinions. I have carefully examined the box belonging to Mrs Carlisle, which was at the Safe Deposit Company, and which we have obtained before proving the will."

"And what was in it?"

"Some money and securities, her marriage certificate, accounts of the bigamy prosecution cut from several papers, and a short letter to poor Violet, telling her the whole story."

"Did she say why she placed it there in the name of Violet Sumner?"

"To conceal it from Clement Vallance. She was fearful that he would try to get it, and steal the money she had put by for Violet."

"Poor woman. She was a careful mother."

"Yes, she was. Tell me, uncle, was it you who employed that solicitor and that woman to look after Violet after Mrs Carlisle's death?"

"Yes; I employed them, but did not tell them the true state of the case. Mrs Yorke gave way to her temper one day, though, and by insulting Miss Carlisle upset my arrangements. It was your mother who imposed this

task on me. I would rather have had nothing to do with it. If it had been known, evil-minded people might have said that I was mixed up with it in a wrongful way."

"To tell you the truth, I once suspected that you were."

"You! Why?"

"On account of your behaviour to me when you found out that I visited River Lawn, and the mystery that seemed to exist there."

"When I found that you were intimate with Mrs Carlisle's daughter, I felt that I must put a stop to such a thing at all hazards. Such a thing must have ended in a terrible scandal."

"I don't see it in that light, though, no doubt, it was better for us to part."

"It was; but we won't talk about it now. The past is past. Will you bring your wife out to visit us for a week or two?"

"She will be delighted."

And that evening Arthur and his wife were received as honoured guests at Redwood House, and Mr Allen Redwood soon concluded that his nephew had married a very estimable girl, whose influence would undoubtedly be all for good.

CHAPTER XX.

SAM HICKS AS GODFATHER.

AMERICA is now Arthur's adopted country, and the house in Drexel Boulevard is his home. He has, it is true, an estate in England, but he is an absentee landlord, for his duties and responsibilities in regard to the Chicago and South-Western Railroad, and other enterprises in which his father-in-law is interested, keep him in the States. In Chicago he is now almost as well known, and fully as popular, as Mr Blanchard; and many a young man in search of a livelihood has reason to be thankful to him for a first start.

Good fortune has not turned his head, and in spite of all his arduous duties, he always finds time to aid Cora in any charitable work, or to listen to the appeal of benighted young men in distress.

Neither has he forgotten his old friends and comrades, for both the Summers' and young

Phillips, who has now attained manhood, are frequent visitors at the marble palace, and each of them is prospering.

One day, about a year after his visit with Cora to Redwood House, a group of fashionably-dressed people were gathered round the font in the leading Protestant Episcopal church of Chicago, and most of those present were greatly surprised to see a tall, gaunt, roughly-clad citizen of the West stand forward and declare himself sponsor for the baby of the railroad king's daughter; but their surprise was intensified when the clergyman bestowed upon the wee youngster the decidedly uncommon name of Samuel Hicks Vallance.

But, at the luncheon following the christening, surprise gave way to amazement, when the guests beheld the young mother make the rough-looking Westerner the "lion" of the party, and a suppressed titter passed round the room when Mr Hicks, folding the infant in his long, brawny arms, awkwardly dangled it to and fro, and essayed to talk to it in infantine language.

"Christenings ain't much in my way, marm," said Sam to Cora, after returning the child to its nurse; "but seeing as it was Arthur's own young 'un, I couldn't keep away.

Thar ain't anything I wouldn't do for him; though, to be quite canderd on the subject, I'd feel more at home follering up cattle thieves than naming the babbies of sich folk as ye. I ain't rigged out for sich a gathering as this."

"You're rigged out with a noble disposition and a kind heart, which are quite enough for us," replied Cora. "Arthur regards you as one of his best friends, and always will."

"I'm proud of it, marm, I'm proud of it; and now that I'm godfairther to the boy I shall have an excuse for coming to see ye every time I arrives in town."

"You don't need an excuse; you are always welcome."

"I'll come agin to the next christening, anyhow," was the blunt response; "and ef so be as the next is a gal, I think it wouldn't be a bad idea to call her 'Sal,' after Arthur's old friend at Squar' Mile Farm."

"What became of Sal and her husband?"

"They moved away from our parts; went up Bismarck way; they still takes farm pupils, I believe. It's too paying a job to let slide. Howsomever, we druv 'em out from nearabouts us."

"It served them right."

"It did that, marm. The country round about us has filled up mightily since Arthur left. New people and new railroads a-turning up all the time. When Arthur was there I used to have to drive all the way to Fargo—forty miles; but now I can put cattle and grain aboard the train only eight miles from home. Yes, things is changed mightily since then. I've got neighbours on all sides now. Thar's two farms within three miles o' us, and settlers coming along continerly. How did ye like Arthur's uncle, marm?"

"I was rather pleasantly surprised with him. He has queer opinions and notions of his own, and certain views of life that he holds spoil him; but, at heart, I believe he is a conscientious man. I got along with him very well."

"Oh, yes, marm; ye're one of those who'd git along with most any one, but I doubt if he and I could hit it off very charfully togither."

"I daresay not. No two people could be more widely different; but he and Arthur are very good friends now."

"He oughn't to 'a sent the lad out to that thieving rascal."

"I daresay he thought it the best thing for him; and, after all, it has turned out well."

"It has that, marm. Thar ain't a young man in the country so much to be envied as Arthur. What he ain't got now ain't worth having."

Cora smiled, and turned her attention to some of the other guests. She knew very well that there was not a happier household in the country than that over which she presided.

THE END.

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